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Corporate Freebies:

Nick Leon's Trash Is Someone Else's Treasure

see page 4

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Standing Up To Sexual Bullies

Let us now praise Marcel Thornton. Thornton, a Baltimore, Maryland radio disc jockey, returned from last October's Million Man March determined never again to play popular music that degrades women and promotes sexual violence. His boss objected. Thornton wouldn't budge. He was fired.

Marcel Thornton has no regrets. "It became very clear to me that I had to take personal responsibility for what I did. As an adult, I owed it to the kids."

Thornton now works for the Odyssey Group in Alexandria, Virginia, where he promotes entertainment for children and young people that's positive, uplifting, and hip.

"Many adults have no idea what kids are listening to these days," Thornton says. "Music is wonderful. I love it, I love rap. But some of the stuff put on the public airwaves and sold in public places today is disgusting—it encourages young men to degrade women."

About the same time Thornton was fired, the advocacy group Children Now released the results of a poll that provided chilling corroboration of his cause: Forty percent of girls ages 14 to 17 said they had a friend their own age who had been hit or beaten by a boyfriend. Forty percent!

Juliet assaulted by Romeo? That's not how the story is supposed to go. But then, of course, Romeo hadn't been bombarded with the mind-numbing message so common in our popular music that says women are "nothin' but bitches."

NEA President
Keith Geiger

The poll, cosponsored by Kaiser Permanente, sought to explore a wide range of threats to children and young people's health.

"We hadn't originally planned to ask about violence by a boyfriend," reports Children Now's Maryann O'Sullivan. "What made us add it was a girl who started crying in a focus group when she talked about how her boyfriend had beaten her up."

Other polls have shown that a shockingly large percentage of girls and young women growing up in America today have been, as a Department of Education report states, "subjected to a pattern of overt sexual hostility accompanied by actual or threatened physical contact and the repeated use of obscene or foul language."

Unfortunately, headlines like "Sex Harassment Makes School Hellish For Girls," seen in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* recently, aren't all that uncommon.

For educators, the evidence is overwhelming: Sexual abuse and harassment can stunt the intellectual and emotional development of girls and young women.

It's high time that men of all ages in our society start standing up, as Marcel Thornton did, to the sexual bullies and those in the entertainment business (music, video games, and television) who egg them on.

The bullies and their supporters need to hear from us. Their need for power or profits does not absolve them. They absolutely must treat girls and women with respect.

We have a long way to go. Too many adults have been moral spectators for too long. How else could we have sunk to the intolerable situation girls and young women find themselves in today?

Psychologists and social workers tell us that men who abuse women were probably abused themselves as children. That's a real shame—and good reason for providing them with help. But we cannot accept that as an excuse, just as we cannot accept a school athlete's star status as an excuse for abusing women. The time for excuses is over.

We need to heed the recent words of Children's Defense Fund leader Marian Wright Edelman (interviewed in this issue of *NEA Today,* see page 7) when she says: "I worry with every fiber of my being about our many children who, lacking a sense of the sacred or internal moral moorings, are trying to grow up in a society without boundaries, without respect.

"Never have we exposed children so early and relentlessly to cultural messages glamorizing violence, sex, possessions, alcohol, and tobacco, with so few mediating influences from responsible adults."

Thank you, Marcel Thornton, for being a responsible adult. May many more men follow your example.

7 Her Cause Is Kids

Her tools: a crusader's mentality, hard work, and prayer. As head of the Children's Defense Fund, Marian Wright Edelman fights for the federal programs that provide a lifeline to America's poor children.

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A Wisconsin teacher joins a once-in-a-lifetime expedition to Antarctica and takes his students along for the ride . . . sort of. Steve Stevenosky spent three weeks on an icebreaker near the South Pole, teaching his kids via the Internet.

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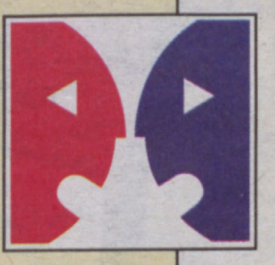
Some American kids go hungry, but far more suffer from various forms of malnutrition. A medical expert explains what happens to children's bodies and minds when they're denied the kinds of nutritious foods they need.

31 Should Schools Bench Pregnant Cheerleaders?

Yes, says a Louisiana teacher: "It's our job to teach students that each decision they make has consequences." No, argues a New Jersey school nurse: "Pregnant teens need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance."



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NATIONAL NEWS

Time for a Better IDEA

Monty Roessel

If you're frustrated with federal rules on educating the disabled, now's the time to speak up. The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act is up for renewal and improvement in Congress this year.

Students with physical or learning disabilities are routinely being mainstreamed into regular classrooms. That makes "everybody a special ed teacher nowadays," says Ed Amundson, a high school teacher of the learning disabled in Sacramento, California.

That's why, he stresses, all school employees have a stake in strengthening the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, due for "reauthorization"—extension and improvement—in this session of Congress.

IDEA sets uniform national standards and provides—or *should* provide—districts with resources to assure "free appropriate education" to the disabled in the "least restrictive environment."

But the grim fact is that IDEA is vastly underfunded—the federal government kicks in just 7 percent, not the authorized 40 percent—and fails to address serious problems that have cropped up with "inclusion."

Top on NEA's list of concerns:

➤ *Inflexible policies for disciplining students with disabilities.* A coalition that includes NEA has called for IDEA language permitting school officials to move "seriously disruptive" or dangerous disabled students—those possessing weapons or drugs or guilty of assault—to an alternative setting with support services where they can learn appropriate behavior. Under current law, such students may return to the same classroom after just 10 days.

NEA is seeking "clear and consistent" discipline policies and a process that resolves problems quickly.

➤ *Insufficient professional development for those who work with the disabled.* NEA is seeking better access to professional development programs for both special and general education employees. Another Association objective: more research on learning styles, together with programs to share and explain research findings.

➤ *Inadequate back-up—in everything from nursing care to paraprofessional support.* NEA is pushing for greater federal support of the work performed by school nurses, psychologists, social workers, and related service providers. "Teachers, librarians, and support people are now being asked to perform nursing services for special needs kids—kids with everything from tracheostomy to ventilator dependency," notes Judith Ressallat, Washington liaison for the National Association of School Nurses. "This is unsafe and violates nurse practice laws in several states."

Ed Amundson, who teaches learning disabled students and provides back-up to regular ed teachers at Sacramento's McClatchy High School, emphasizes that inclusion "can be appropriate when all the supports are in place," including a school nurse and some adjustments in both class size and physical space.

More special education assistants like Arizona's Stan Uentillie are needed to make the federal IDEA more effective.

"Our faculty is very responsive to the disabled," he adds. "That's because we work with teachers, ask them what they need, and help them succeed."

Amundson, who chairs NEA's Caucus for Educators of Exceptional Children, is working with Association lobbyists to enact a better IDEA.

"We're taking your thoughts to lawmakers," he assures NEA members, "but it can't just be us talking. Senate staffers are telling us, for instance, that they need your letters asking for better disciplinary language."

Get out that pen. Now.

—Dave Winans

Election '96 Update

Want to know where the presidential candidates stand on education and children's issues? A complete comparison is now available. For a copy, write to NEA Government Relations, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Online, check the NEA Web site at http://www.nea.org.

What You Can Do

➤ *Write your U.S. senators and representatives* urging them to support funding for IDEA and the principles outlined above.

➤ *Invite your members of Congress to your school* to see both your successes—and problems—in educating students with disabilities.

➤ *Find community partners*—in the effort to ensure full, appropriate inclusion of disabled students.

HEROES & ZEROES

A Music-to-Our-Ears Award to actor Richard Dreyfuss for his enthusiastic advocacy for arts education. Using his role in *Mr. Holland's Opus* as an opening, Dreyfuss has been touring the country speaking out against budget cuts that gut arts education. An Oscar for this statement alone: "I think," Dreyfuss said, "you can no more deny children music or drawing or drama than you can cut their arms off."

The Wedding-Bell-Blues Award goes to an assistant superintendent in Lawrence, Kansas who didn't exactly congratulate two local teachers when they decided to get married in the auditorium at Central Junior High. Instead, after seeing the local publicity the event garnered, he charged NEA members Chuck and Sara Holley $50 for using the space. Chuck, a 24-year drama teacher and a class act, sent a shopping bag full of pennies to settle his debt.

A One-of-Our-Own Award to Maine teacher Barbara Kelley, who was recently elected vice chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. A long-time Association activist and instructional leader, Kelley is well cast in her new role as professional profession-booster. Just one more sign that teachers *can* run the show.

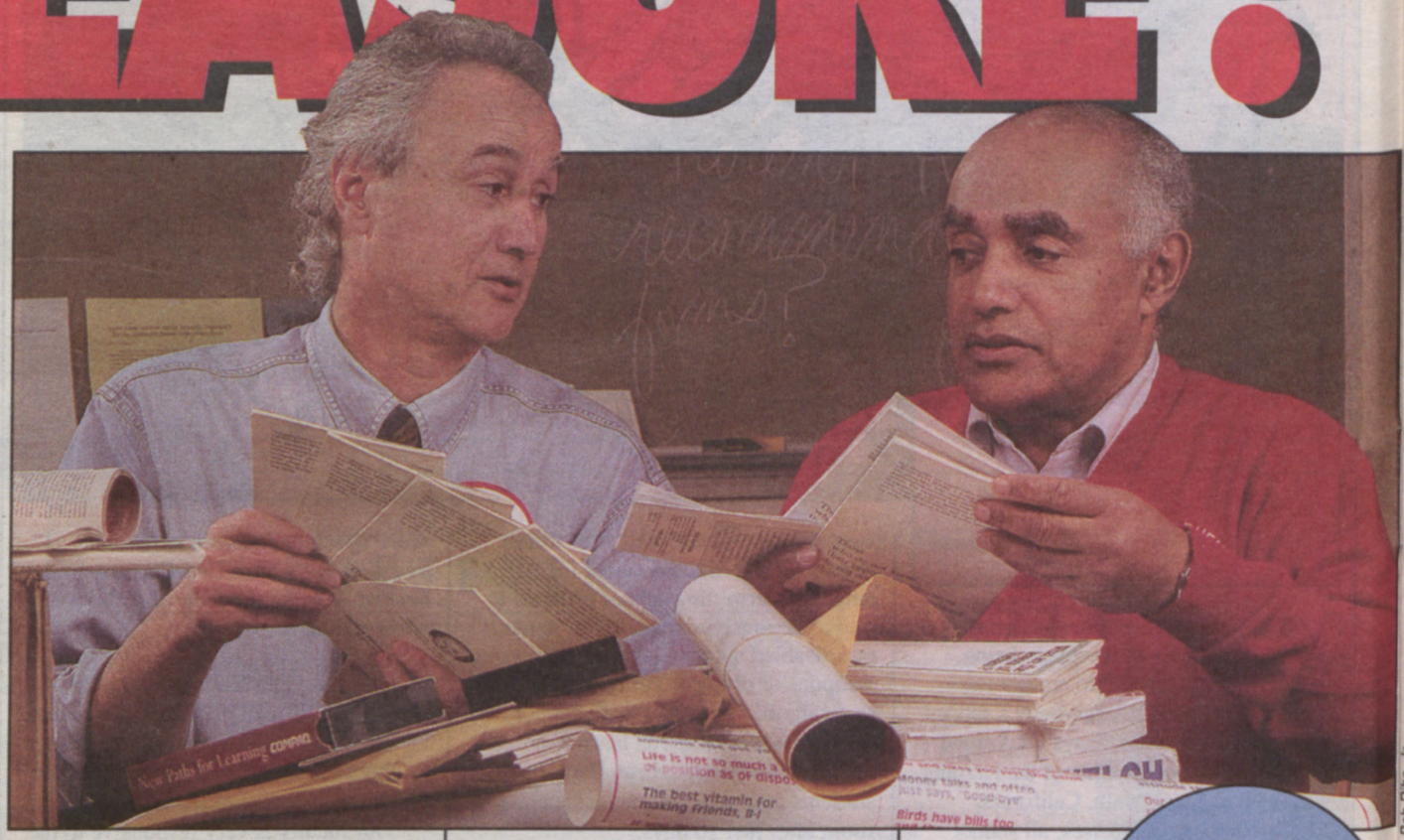
The Highest-Hypocrisy Award to Congressman Jim McCrery (R-LA) for whining until the Federal Election Commission agreed he could pay his babysitting costs out of campaign funds, instead of out of his $133,600 annual salary. At the same time, McCrery voted for a welfare bill that would cut funds for child care for the poor and middle class. How's that for empathy?

Award the game ball to Neil Smith, Kansas City's All-Pro defensive end and national spokesman for the Foundation for Exceptional Children's Yes I Can program. In addition to his Foundation duties, Smith—dyslexic himself—now works with 30 Kansas City elementary kids every other Tuesday. "It's a part of me," he says. So's integrity and a great value system.

COVER STORY

TRASH or TREASURE?

Some corporations and interest groups believe the shortest way to a student's heart (and pocketbook) is through free classroom materials.



San Jose teacher Nick Leon reviews a stack of "educational materials" with colleague Manny Nascimento.

Every week, sometimes a couple times a week, San Jose teacher Nick Leon dutifully unloads his mailbox and begins sifting through a pile of free curricular materials that have just arrived from corporations and interest groups.

A few he'll keep, but most he'll pitch. Some of the materials may have educational value, Leon explains, but their main motive is to sell something—a product or a point of view—and he's not buying.

Going after students' hearts, minds, and pocketbooks isn't a new phenomenon. What's new is the volume of free materials, the increasingly sophisticated ways they're packaged as instructional tools, and tight budget times. The combination has some parents and educators groups uneasy.

That's why NEA has joined with *Good Housekeeping* magazine to call attention to today's brand of commercialism—both covert and flagrant—in the classroom.

In the magazine's February issue, journalist David France states that "over the past five years, retailing has steadily become the fourth *R* of public education" as corporations and various interest groups strive "to improve their image or promote a particular message."

There's no shortage of examples to illustrate the trend.

Consumers Union has analyzed more than 200 "sponsored educational materials" and issued *Captive Kids: A Report on Commercial Pressures on Kids at School*.

The report notes that some 68 percent of the tested materials contain "biased or incomplete information, promoting a viewpoint that favors consumption of the sponsor's product or service or a position that favors the company or its economic agenda."

Among the most blatantly one-sided handouts:

➤ "Decision Earth," a packet from Procter & Gamble (discontinued in the United States but still available in Canada), teaches that disposable diapers are better for the environment than cloth—and that clear-cut logging "mimics nature's way of getting rid of trees."

➤ The "Prego Thickness Experiment" asks students to prove Campbell Soup's claim that its spaghetti sauce is thicker than Ragu's. This exercise supposedly teaches "scientific thinking."

➤ "Puerto Rico: The More You Look, the More You See" is a curriculum guide financed by the Puerto Rico Tourism Company and the island's governor's office, written and distributed by Scholastic magazines. Some 219,000 teachers got the guide—and an incentive to use it. Twenty teachers who used the materials "the most creatively" won free vacations to the island.

➤ "Scientists and the Alaska Oil Spill," a videotape produced by Exxon, claims that the company's cleanup of the *Valdez* oil spill in Alaska was flawless. The tape shows workers spray-cleaning the rocks along the shoreline but neglects to mention that the technique causes severe damage by killing essential bacteria and flora.

➤ "Soft Drinks and Nutrition," a colorful poster produced by the National Soft Drink Association, compares soft drinks to more nutritious foods. "A diet of milk alone would result in dietary deficiencies," the poster says. "Likewise, soft drink consumption alone would be unhealthy."

Helping corporations and other interest groups get to you is an entire industry of producers and distributors of in-school materials. Lifetime Learning

Take NEA's 'Classroom Integrity' Pledge

To preserve classroom integrity, use only materials that:

- ➤ have real educational value and promote a love of learning
- ➤ reinforce basic classroom curricula, not contrived activities
- ➤ advance an educational goal, not merely a public relations purpose
- ➤ allow any decision to participate to be made at the school level
- ➤ are part of programs open to students who voluntarily choose to participate.

Do not participate in programs or use materials that:

- ➤ offer trips, gifts, or prizes in exchange for teachers pushing commercial products in their classrooms
- ➤ discriminate against any group of students
- ➤ impede or interfere with student instructional time
- ➤ require the purchase of a product by students or parents
- ➤ require teachers, students, or parents to promote a commercial product.

COVER STORY

Systems, which bills itself as the industry leader, boasts that its school materials can help corporate sponsors reach up to 63 million students and their parents.

Firms like Lifetime offer sponsors a unique opportunity to "imprint" brand loyalty in children, market their message in schools without "clutter or competition," and influence the buying decisions of students' families through the "pester factor" and take-home materials.

"Children ages 4-12 influence more than $131 billion of their parents' spending power each year," the Lifetime sales brochure reminds customers.

"Coming from schools," Lifetime adds, "all these materials create an extra measure of credibility and give your message extra weight." Even more so when they reach the "invaluable marketing resource" known as the school teacher.

School systems can only contend with this marketing onslaught through a "concerted effort from the school board down to the classroom teacher," says Charlotte Baecher, education services director for Consumers Union.

Baecher calls for a "dynamic" review procedure in each district—similar to that for textbooks—and "mutual support throughout" the process.

Review or no review, many NEA members see nothing wrong with using materials from non-traditional sources.

Sandra Hopkins, who teaches second grade at Peters Elementary School in Slatington, Pennsylvania, supplements her nutrition lessons with materials from the American Dairy Council.

"They're more up to date than our old teaching aids," she explains, "which talk about milk, but not about substitutes like skim or lactose-free milk."

Even Nick Leon—an NEA activist who spearheaded a legal challenge in his district against Channel One, the in-school commercial "news" network—sees the appeal. He admits that sponsored educational materials appeal to some teachers because they're "free, available, and well-written.

"Often textbooks are outdated or unavailable," says Leon, a coordinator at Foothill Continuation High School in San Jose, California, "while those little pamphlets or videos are frequently well done, colorful, and appealing."

Still, he's skeptical. "When someone gives you something for free," Leon warns, "most likely, they have an agenda."

Like many teachers, Hopkins believes in her own ability to filter the materials, see a corporate agenda, and ignore it. "As a teacher, you bring out what you want to bring out in a lesson," the 27-year veteran emphasizes.

Some teachers feel more comfortable using free classroom materials when they take the time to reveal the corporate agenda to their students.

In Parachute, Colorado, high school science teacher Robert Paulis encourages a sort of "comparison shopping" when he teaches a state-mandated unit on environmental pollution.

Paulis, who teaches at Grand Valley High School, shows his students videos from corporations, environmental sources, and "middle of the road" producers. "I give them all sides of the story to let them make up their own minds," he says.

When, for example, he discusses mining clean-up, Paulis shows a company video from ASARCO—bearing the message that "mining opened the West" and that ASARCO operations are environmentally safe—then contrasts it with a PBS "Nova" documentary called "Poison in the Rockies."

And he encourages his students—some of whose parents work in the oil and gas industry—to voice their opinions. "Before this, they've never seen both sides of the issue," Paulis concludes. "Students need to see a counterpoint, to be open-minded."

Another way some educators reach for objectivity is to teach students to ferret out the corporate point of view themselves—in today's lingo, to teach them "media literacy skills."

In Wichita Falls, Texas, for example, the Better Business Bureau's regional Education Foundation is teaming up with two elementary schools to teach second graders about advertising, propaganda techniques, and product comparison by price, labels, and quality testing.

"These kids have developed an awareness of products," reports teacher Rebecca Hernandez. "We've made them wiser consumers and taught them not to buy on impulse."

However corporate freebies are handled, they have more than a toehold in today's classrooms because today's educators have too little time to write their own curricular materials, too little say over what materials they use, and too little money to buy the materials they'd choose.

"Our budget is extremely tight due to low tax income and extreme cutbacks over the last five to six years," notes Sandra Hopkins, who's president of Pennsylvania's Northern Lehigh Education Association. "I'm limited to spending on materials what I was spending four years ago, yet prices are skyrocketing.

"The price of texts is outrageous—it costs the district $19.97 for each consumable math workbook," she adds. "As a result, my district is cutting back on materials and initiating book-free programs."

Small wonder that "free" materials have such an appeal—especially in poorer school districts.

Alex Molnar, an education professor and author of the upcoming book *Giving Kids the Business: The Commercialization of America's Schools,* has studied this trend for years.

Given the lack of adequate school funding, he says, "teachers, administrators, and educators in general are being asked to give something that is not theirs to give—time and attention—to advertisers."

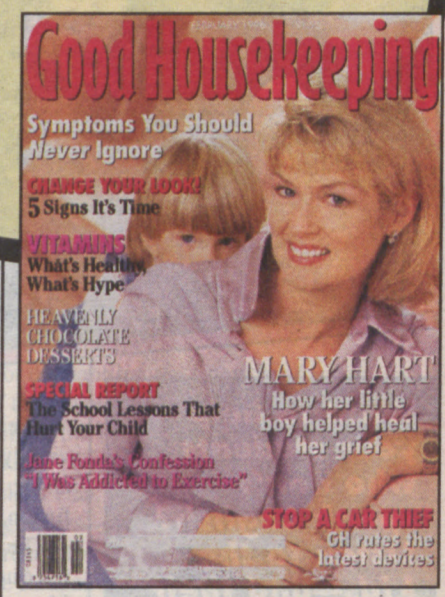
—Dave Winans

NEA, Good Housekeeping Team Up For Integrity

Good Housekeeping's 24 million readers and NEA's 2.2 million members have something in common—a sincere commitment to kids and education. That's why the two teamed up in a recent campaign to raise awareness about corporate intrusion into classroom curriculum.

A four-page article in *Good Housekeeping*'s February issue—described on the cover as "The School Lessons that Hurt Your Child"—explains the problem and includes a "Preserve Classroom Integrity" pledge readers can sign and return to NEA. The cards and letters are pouring in.

"We were pleased to enlist the lobbying help of the NEA because of its reputation and high profile," says Diane Salvatore, the magazine's deputy editor, "and because of its unique ability to reach out to so many school boards and teachers nationwide. Putting that together with *Good Housekeeping's* reputation and readership makes for a powerful voice against this disturbing trend."



Stacy Edmonds

Pennsylvania teachers Sandra Hopkins, right, and Margaret Conrad use materials from some interest groups to supplement lessons.

Resources

➤ *Captive Kids: Commercial Pressures on Kids at School.* Send $3 to Consumers Union Education Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703.

➤ *Zillions,* a bimonthly consumer magazine for children, from *Consumer Reports.* One-year subscription: $16. Write *Zillions* Subscription Department, P.O. Box 51777, Boulder, CO 80323.

➤ For more information on media literacy education, get on the Center for Media Literacy's mailing list, 1962 S. Shenandoah St., Los Angeles, CA 90034. Phone: 310/559-2944.

HUMAN RIGHTS

At Sea In English

Michael Tweed

ELD teacher Janet Curtis and her colleagues at Canyon High in Anaheim, California teach students who speak primarily Spanish—but also Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Farsi, and Tagalog.

Want to help your students who don't speak English? Listen to the kids—and their teachers.

Every day, hundreds of new students enter America's public schools with little or no understanding of English.

While policy makers at all levels of government debate the merits of—and funding for—bilingual education, thousands of educators around the country struggle to find ways to reach these students.

Three Orange County, California teachers—high school English Language Development (ELD) teacher Janet Curtis and bilingual elementary teachers Elsie Espinoza and Elena Stoces—have worked to help non-English speaking students for many years.

They're experts in helping students feel comfortable in the classroom—comfortable enough to want to come back, comfortable enough to learn.

For many immigrants, the first few days in an American school can be traumatic. When Curtis, Espinoza, and Stoces surveyed their students this year about their first days at school, they opened a floodgate of negative emotions.

The younger ones reported feeling "very strange, very new, and very different"—unless there were people in the classroom who spoke their language.

The high schoolers had a variety of feelings, including anger, frustration, anxiety, confusion, isolation, and fear.

The older students said they felt "upset and very mad," "frustrated," "left out," "depressed," "scared when I met my first American stranger," "lost," "impatient and confused," "like a moron," and "nervous and excited."

Those who reported positive feelings were pleased to find themselves in the same class with a sibling, a kid from their home town, or with kids and a teacher who spoke their language.

How is a teacher to help? Curtis, Espinoza, and Stoces offer these suggestions:

➤ For starters, listen to the kids. Those Curtis, Espinoza, and Stoces work with had some very specific requests.

Don't put us, they asked, in situations that require English proficiency—we end up feeling embarrassed and foolish.

Don't speak quickly or give tests or homework that we can't understand. Don't keep asking us to speak louder. Don't ask us to speak, read, or translate in front of the class. And don't get annoyed if we ask for repeated explanations.

➤ Encourage cooperative learning. Mix ability levels to help the less fluent students become more proficient. Sometimes group the kids according to the students' first language so they can give answers in that language and more fluent students can translate into English.

At other times, mix groups so students cannot rely on their first language at all and are forced to work in English with students from other language backgrounds.

➤ Encourage parents to preregister their children for school. Post bilingual notices around the neighborhood, listing the official papers the parents are to bring.

Follow up by holding a meeting for parents and children who have preregistered. At the meeting, the children will meet all their teachers beforehand and hear about school routines. And each parent will get a packet of materials and instructions for teaching learning skills to their children.

For parents who are illiterate or have trouble reading, provide instructions on tape and give them a recorder with instructions on how to use it.

➤ Encourage children's natural dependence on each other. When new students come to your class, introduce them briefly so they won't feel embarrassed or be in the spotlight.

Talk to them during the day and whenever you have a free moment—to get to know them and to do quick assessments of their reading and writing skills. Then buddy them with another child for a week.

—Mary Faber
NEA Human and Civil Rights

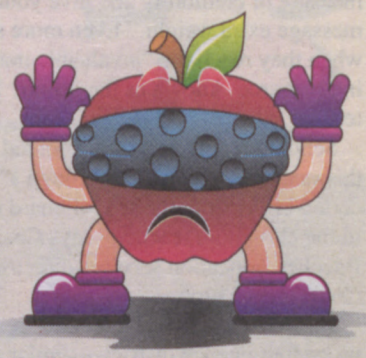
WASHINGTON WATCH

Congress Says No to Education

Need evidence of this Congress's *real* agenda for kids and schools? Just look at how the House and Senate voted on a benchmark education funding proposal during the budget standoff with President Clinton.

In late January, both houses defeated an amendment that would have raised education spending to 1995 levels, adjusted for inflation, until March 15. If passed, the amendment would have restored $3.1 billion in federal aid to education.

Holding Education Hostage



NEA lobbyist Dale Lestina calls the amendment votes the clearest test yet of which members of Congress truly support schools. "The opponents of adequate school funding are holding out for larger tax breaks for the rich," charges Lestina, "and they're willing to cut deeply into education programs to do it." You can help stop them by writing to your representatives in Washington.

How They Voted:

In the House of Representatives, 222 Republicans voted against the amendment to restore education funding to last year's levels. All 188 Democrats present voted in favor, as did Republicans Franks (CT), Heineman (NC), Leach (IA), and Torkildsen (MA) and Independent Sanders (VT).

Nineteen House members did not cast a ballot: Baker (R-LA), Barcia (D-MI), Barton (R-TX), Brewster (D-OK), Chapman (D-TX), Clyburn (D-SC), Gingrich (R-GA), Hancock (R-MO), Hayes (D-LA), Johnson (D-TX), Linder (R-GA), Myers (R-IN), Serrano (D-NY), Smith (R-TX), Taylor (R-NC), Waters (D-CA), Waxman (D-CA), Wyden (D-OR), and Young (R-AK).

In the Senate, a bipartisan team of sponsors—Kennedy (D-MA), Simon (D-IL), Snowe (R-ME), and Jeffords (R-VT)—brought this amendment to the floor, where it fell short—51-40 in favor—of the required 60 votes needed for passage of such a measure.

Republicans voting in favor were: Chafee (RI), Cohen (ME), Hatch (UT), Jeffords (VT), Snowe (ME), and Warner (VA).

Democrats in favor were: Akaka (HI), Baucus (MT), Biden (DE), Bingaman (NM), Boxer (CA), Bradley (NJ), Breaux (LA), Bryan (NV), Bumpers (AR), Byrd (WV), Conrad (ND), Daschle (SD), Dodd (CT), Dorgan (ND), Exon (NE), Feingold (WI), Feinstein (CA), Ford (KY), Glenn (OH), Graham (FL), Harkin (IA), Heflin (AL), Inouye (HI), Johnston (LA), Kennedy (MA), Kerrey (NE), Kerry (MA), Kohl (WI), Lautenberg (NJ), Leahy (VT), Levin (MI), Lieberman (CT), Mikulski (MD), Moseley-Braun (IL), Moynihan (NY), Murray (WA), Nunn (GA), Pell (RI), Pryor (AR), Reid (NV), Robb (VA), Rockefeller (WV), Sarbanes (MD), Simon (IL), and Wellstone (MN).

Voting against were these Republicans: Abraham (MI), Ashcroft (MO), Bond (MO), Brown (CO), Burns (MT), Cochran (MS), Coverdell (GA), Craig (ID), D'Amato (NY), Dewine (OH), Dole (KS), Domenici (NM), Frist (TN), Gorton (WA), Grams (MN), Grassley (IA), Gregg (NH), Hatfield (OR), Helms (NC), Hutchison (TX), Inhofe (OK), Kassebaum (KS), Kempthorne (ID), Lott (MS), Lugar (IN), Mack (FL), McCain (AZ), McConnell (KY), Murkowski (AK), Nickles (OK), Pressler (SD), Roth (DE), Santorum (PA), Simpson (WY), Smith (NH), Specter (PA), Stevens (AK), Thomas (WY), Thompson (TN), and Thurmond (SC).

Those senators absent were: Bennett (R-UT), Campbell (R-CO), Coats (R-IN), Faircloth (R-NC), Gramm (R-TX), Hollings (D-SC), Kyl (R-AZ), and Shelby (R-AL).

Meet:

Joe Di Dio

Marian Wright Edelman

More Than A Prayer

"I get so sick and tired of politicians of all parties using children as photo ops and political props while voting against the very things the children need to grow up," says Marian Wright Edelman. Since she founded the Children's Defense Fund in 1973, she's crusaded for children's rights in these straightforward terms. Yet her latest book isn't a policy manifesto. It's titled Guide My Feet: Prayers and Meditations on Loving and Working for Children *(Beacon Press, $17.95). When Edelman spoke recently with* NEA Today*'s Leona Hiraoka in her Capitol Hill office, she made it clear hers were prayers with a punch.*

"Guide my feet while I run this race"—what's beyond the finish line?
A nation that puts its children first, parents who put their children first, a nation where no child is left behind.

I find it amazing that in the wealthiest nation in history, we let—seemingly without shame—our children be the poorest of its citizens. That in a nation that leads the world in military technology, we let a child be killed by guns every hour and a half. And that in a nation that pretends to be for family values, we would rather spend $20,000 to imprison a child than spend the $3,500 a year to give that child a Head Start.

We do have a real crisis with our children today. And that's the crisis, I think, of adults failing to live what they preach.

You started out writing a policy book but ended up with a book of prayers. Does this bespeak a certain despair?
It's not about despair. It's about the importance of keeping going.

In my book, there are prayers that recognize many teachers and child welfare workers struggle every day to do the best they can for children. And I try to say to them, you're doing it as a mission, so don't give up.

I guess this book is less about despair than it is about "let us get our act together—and ask God's help to get our act together." All this violence and family breakdown, the breakdown in values—it's a symptom of something deeper.

For one, our absolute obsession with external material values. You know, it's time to create a new Dow Jones based on the purpose and quality of life and our families and neighborhoods and see if we can't rediscover what's important to us as Americans, what holds us together. Surely it's more than Mortal Kombat and "things."

What's the most striking difference between the world you grew up in and the world today?
Well, Bennettsville, South Carolina wasn't *all* wonderful. It was segregated, there was a lot of poverty, and government not only was not a helper, it was a hindrance.

But what was different was that we had a seamless web of support from our parents and our religious congregation and our schools. When the segregated outside world told us that we weren't worth very much, we had a buffer of Black adults who told us that wasn't so. We learned how to become caring adults because we had adults who cared about us.

How do you figure out which politicians today really care about kids?
By how they vote! By what they do!

What can we be thinking about, whether we're Democrat or Republican, talking about welfare "reform" that's going to leave over a million *new* children poor? What kind of health reform is it that would move children under a Medicaid block grant so that instead of having 9.5 million uninsured, you'll get 19 million uninsured children by 2002?

What kind of education reform is it that just simply cuts and slashes, that turns over programs, without accountability and without standards, to states?

It is profoundly unjust and un-American what is going on here. Politicians have taken $250 billion from means-tested safety net programs for poor children and families—not to balance the budget, but to give a $250 billion tax cut to the non-needy.

If we have leaders who propose to widen the gap between rich and poor and take food, education, and child care away from the poor child, that's going to destroy the nation.

What's the one thing educators should hold their congresspeople responsible for?
Not dismantling the safety net for any of the key welfare programs—maintaining the foundation for this "house" for poor families and the disabled. That way, when all the suffering recurs—the proposed cuts in welfare are five to six times worse than the Reagan years'—you at least have something you can put the furniture back into.

But the block grants are attempting to bulldoze the whole house. If you do that, you'll not get it back. That's what congressional leaders are trying to do.

Lobbying, praying—what else are you working on?
The Children's Defense Fund is asking thousands, millions—as many Americans who say they care about kids—to come on June 1 to the Lincoln Memorial for a "Stand for Children" Day, a national day of commitment for children. (See box below.)

We want to draw a moral line in the sand for every political leader, one that they will not cross. It's time to have a Hippocratic oath in the political process that we will not do harm to children.

It's about maintaining the guaranteed core of decency so that all the children can come to all of our schools, with decent food and decent health care and a place to go if their own family should break down. And I don't know where you find the middle ground on that.

Stand for Children

The Children's Defense Fund is the driving force behind "Stand for Children" Day, a rally planned for June 1 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to affirm the nation's responsibility for improving children's quality of life. For more information, contact Stand for Children, 1832 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20009, 800/233-1200.

Grassroots

State

NEBRASKA

In an unusual alliance for an unlikely cause, the Nebraska State Education Association and local ranching and farming groups have banded together to push for property tax reform.

The initiative, the Citizens' Amendment to Reduce Property Taxes, calls for a constitutional amendment to cut property taxes by 30 percent while safeguarding funding for public education.

The coalition, led by the 23,000-member NSEA and the Nebraska Farm Bureau, will try to collect enough signatures to put the initiative on the November 1996 ballot.

PENNSYLVANIA

Good old common sense is what's needed to improve public schools. So says the Pennsylvania State Education Association in its new report, "Change That Works."

PSEA proposals include tough academic standards, reasonable class sizes, up-to-date technology for students, increased parental involvement, and collective bargaining based on fairness but without strikes.

Says PSEA President David J. Gondak: "While policy-makers debate educational fads and 'silver bullet' approaches such as tuition vouchers and privatization, we are focusing on solutions that actually work."

UTAH

"A mountain of hope for half a million young people in this state's schools"—that's how Utah Education Association President Lily Eskelsen describes Governor Mike Leavitt's budget for public schools.

The governor's budget plan recommends class-size reduction, an increase in school operating funds, and more technology in the classroom. State legislators began debate on the proposal in January.

VERMONT

To foster stronger ties between public schools and the communities that support them, the Vermont Education Association plans to establish Listening-to-Parents Committees in each of its 150 locals.

"Our goal is to invite parents into our schools for direct, face-to-face discussions with educators about issues of instruction, classroom, school and home environments, and education quality," says Vermont-NEA President Angelo Dorta.

IN M

Lawmakers Fire on Bilingual Education

Dennis Keenon

Students gather at the state capitol in Lansing, Michigan to support mandatory bilingual education programs. Michigan schoolchildren speak more than 100 different languages.

In a move that could have dramatic impact in the state and across the nation, Michigan lawmakers have made it easy for school districts to eliminate bilingual education programs.

In the past, school districts were required to establish bilingual programs when 20 or more students spoke a common language other than English. Not anymore. Now bilingual education is optional.

"Our fear," says Michigan Education Association lobbyist Linda Myers, "is that this is the first step down the road to eliminating the bilingual education program here entirely."

This year, 30,000 Michigan students benefit from bilingual instruction. How many will benefit next year is anybody's guess.

While state funding for bilingual programs won't be cut, overall state education funding will be tight, and federal funds will likely decrease. "Bilingual programs could be the first on the chopping block," Myers says.

To protest the change, hundreds of advocates for bilingual education gathered at the state capitol in Lansing last fall. Elias Chapa, a seventh grade social studies teacher in Willow Run, addressed the crowd.

"I know from first-hand experience what can happen to children of limited or non-English speaking ability," he said. "Not only is it difficult, if not impossible, for them to learn, but their self-esteem is destroyed by failing grades and damaging labels. I'm thankful that hasn't happened to my two daughters, but I'm deeply saddened at the number of children in Michigan schools it could happen to in the years ahead.

"I keep asking myself," he continued, "why there is opposition to a program that has helped so many young people succeed academically and socially? Why eliminate an educational program that has produced only positive results?"

A final note: In addition to the change to bilingual education, Michigan lawmakers lifted mandates on core curriculum and site-based decision making statewide, made it easier for districts to hire uncertified teachers, and increased the number of charter schools that could be created.

IN WASHINGTON

Curing 'Sick' Buildings

WEA Action

Spokane teacher Pat Keene stands by while the air quality in her classroom is tested by a Metrosonics 500 machine. Keene, a third grade teacher at Arlington Elementary School, says improved air quality has made a big difference to her health.

The movement for indoor air quality in Washington State schools started with one teacher—and her allergist.

Spokane, Washington elementary teacher Pat Keene used to teach "in stuffy music rooms without windows" and "in a little dungeon we called the Radon Room."

After years of allergy symptoms, a suggestion from her allergist led Keene to suspect "sick building syndrome," the term of art for buildings with inadequate ventilation and air circulation. She did research, surveyed colleagues about their health—then sought solutions at the bargaining table.

Eventually, the Spokane Education Association reached agreement on an independent agency to test the air quality in local schools. Once problems were documented, SEA bargained a joint committee to work together to find solutions.

Committee members negotiated some simple remedies—like allowing teachers to open their windows for five minutes a day and adjust their own thermostats. They educated employees on the problem's causes and potential solutions. And the school district began to make some changes.

So far, Keene says, there's been a 50 percent improvement in ventilation in many of the sick buildings just by making sure the ducts in the systems led to where they were supposed to lead and by repairing leaks.

Keene's now taking the cause statewide as chair of the Washington Education Association's Indoor Air Quality Task Force, which will share the expertise developed in Spokane.

"Why reinvent the wheel?" Keene asks. "We designed surveys, we've got lists of signs and symptoms and a lot of helpful resources—and we intend to share."

IN NEW MEXIC

Liz Ward

A GIFT HORSE FROM NEA-LAS CRUCES: Stacy Burnam, 8, is one of many disabled children who's back in the saddle thanks to a unique donation from NEA-Las Cruces. The local recently gave a gentle 20-year-old Arabian horse named Knickers to Handprints, a riding program that gives disabled kids a mental and physical lift. "We were absolutely delighted to help," says NEA-LC President Sandy Abbott (right and inset). How'd NEA-LC come to own a horse? Departing local President Debra Hanson gave it to the local when she left town.

STATE BY STATE

What Do Public Schools Offer?

Two out of three students in Alaska attend a public school that offers bilingual education—in Pennsylvania, that number's fewer than one in 10. In Iowa, nearly all students attend schools with gifted and talented programs—in New Hampshire, four in 10 do. How does your state measure up?

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Percentage of students enrolled in public schools that offer:

STATE	BILINGUAL EDUCATION	REMEDIAL MATH	PROGRAMS FOR THE GIFTED AND TALENTED	EXTENDED DAY
Alabama	1.7	59.7	71.3	21.8
Alaska	65.3	70.9	85.9	22.0
Arizona	38.5	58.6	86.4	42.4
Arkansas	6.7	77.4	96.9	12.5
California	59.0	56.9	74.7	28.5
Colorado	23.8	51.6	70.3	22.9
Connecticut	12.6	78.2	56.5	26.8
Delaware	12.9	69.0	77.6	19.4
District of Columbia	18.9	68.3	84.5	43.7
Florida	28.3	52.0	75.9	43.4
Georgia	9.4	82.1	90.7	29.9
Hawaii	44.7	54.1	93.0	66.0
Idaho	31.8	80.6	75.0	10.4
Illinois	24.0	61.3	78.2	18.4
Indiana	7.1	44.3	69.8	33.0
Iowa	5.0	45.1	96.7	12.7
Kansas	14.3	55.2	86.7	20.2
Kentucky	3.7	54.1	75.2	48.6
Louisiana	8.1	55.0	76.4	20.1
Maine	5.3	64.7	62.7	15.4
Maryland	4.2	64.7	80.6	37.4
Massachusetts	28.3	59.9	31.6	24.6
Michigan	21.1	73.1	62.9	20.2
Minnesota	6.6	80.2	75.4	31.0
Mississippi	4.6	74.7	73.0	10.7
Missouri	2.9	43.3	63.5	29.8
Montana	11.4	80.7	69.2	14.2
Nebraska	9.9	59.1	67.9	9.7
Nevada	28.7	46.6	82.5	47.0
New Hampshire	4.7	62.0	40.1	17.8
New Jersey	23.1	94.2	76.0	28.7
New Mexico	65.6	55.1	87.9	22.4
New York	30.7	80.9	56.3	20.5
North Carolina	13.9	50.2	90.5	41.3
North Dakota	8.2	66.9	34.4	15.2
Ohio	9.3	49.7	71.1	18.6
Oklahoma	18.9	58.2	92.2	16.8
Oregon	25.9	80.0	91.8	25.2
Pennsylvania	7.4	58.8	93.1	11.9
Rhode Island	8.8	39.7	50.3	7.7
South Carolina	4.1	93.9	87.8	23.8
South Dakota	6.2	72.2	93.0	9.1
Tennessee	1.5	65.8	80.2	21.1
Texas	36.1	57.5	88.2	22.1
Utah	25.2	79.9	59.8	10.1
Vermont	5.6	70.7	28.4	14.9
Virginia	6.6	58.0	93.2	20.1
Washington	15.8	81.6	65.7	17.7
West Virginia	0.0	62.3	84.6	8.1
Wisconsin	11.0	59.4	82.6	19.3
Wyoming	10.6	63.4	51.1	17.7
United States	**23.2**	**61.0**	**77.9**	**40.8**

Local

CALIFORNIA

The Atascadero school district stockpiled more than 20 percent of its budget in reserves—and yet the last raise teachers got was less than 1 percent in 1990. Until this year.

After 18 months of negotiations—plus fact-finding, community organizing, and a strike vote—the 265 members of the Atascadero District Teachers Association settled an 11th hour contract that provides raises, bonuses, and retroactive pay totalling 20 percent over two years.

"The new agreement," says President Ann Moloney, "coupled with the support of the communities, has done wonders for the morale of teachers."

MISSISSIPPI

It was the week before Christmas, and the North Panola school district couldn't meet its payroll.

Alerted to the problem, leaders of the Mississippi Association of Educators voted to provide short-term loans to Association members for the difference between their regular take-home pay and what they would actually be receiving. The checks were delivered December 21.

In January, the state appeared ready to take over the financially strapped district.

COLORADO

Call it a "dues benefit"—and call it unique. In lieu of a bonus, Greeley Education Association leaders got their district to pay one year's dues to the professional organization of each members' choice.

As a result, GEA membership grew from 560 to 722—and reaction from existing members was positive. "It was a recognition of our professionalism," says GEA President Dorothy Benner.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Educational assistants in Sioux Falls continue to pull out all stops in their efforts to get a satisfactory contract.

The 230 school support employees have done informational picketing and community outreach, written letters to the editor, packed school board meetings, and filed an unfair labor practice charge. Still, no contract.

"I've already lost 30 pounds on the picket line," says local President Sharon Eck. "What's another 10 going to hurt?" At presstime, the assistants were waiting for a fact-finder's report.

"You've got the most important job in the world."

"I admire what you do."

"So you're a teacher. That's great."

"I take my hat off to you."

"Keep up the good work."

"It's nice to meet someone dedicated to America's kids."

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Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	Average daily balance (including new purchases).
Transaction Fee for Purchases	Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase; $2 minimum, $10 maximum.
Transaction Fee for Cash Advances and Fees for Paying Late or Exceeding the Credit Limit	Transaction fee for bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Transaction fee for Premium Access Check® or Preferred Access Check® cash advances: 1% of each cash advance; $2 minimum; $10 maximum. Late Payment Fee: $10. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $10.

The current APR for cash advances is 5.9% through your first five statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR will vary and will apply to both new and outstanding cash advance balances. The current indexed APR for cash advances is 16.35% which may vary. The transaction fee for two specially designated Premium Access Checks® or Preferred Access Checks® will be waived. Cash advances cannot be used to pay off or pay down another MBNA® account.

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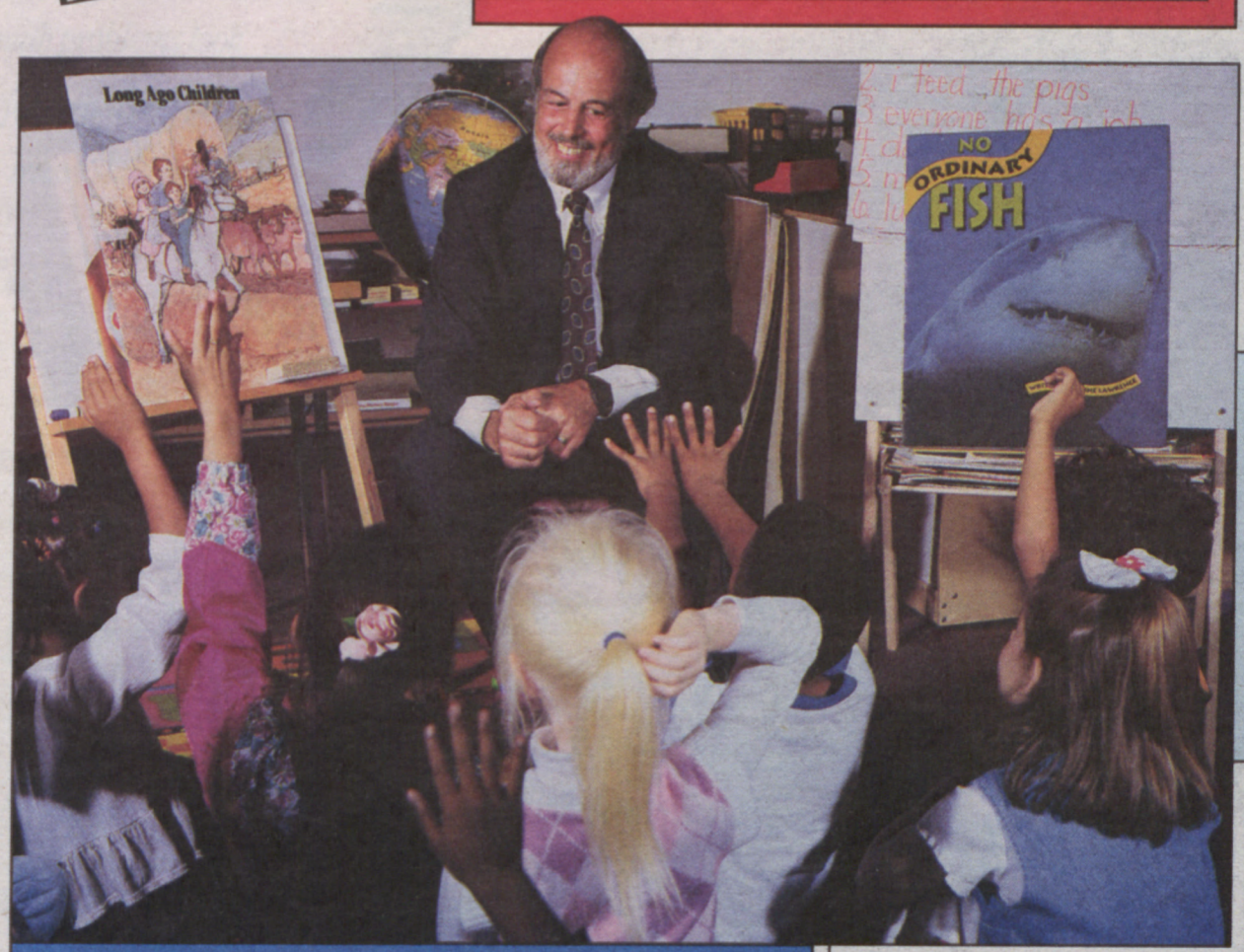
Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work



Professor Proctor Goes Back To School

"I can't help someone become a good teacher by spending my time in a college classroom talking about what makes good teaching."

So Baylor University education professor Tom Proctor spends his days at an elementary school in Waco, Texas.

He teaches three college classes there. He supervises student teachers and compares notes with veteran teachers there. And yes, he teaches the kids there, too.

Proctor works at Hillcrest Professional Development School—an elementary school that works with Baylor University to teach kids and train new teachers at the same time. But Proctor's just one member of the school's dedicated staff team.

Gloria McCoy's another. A 27-year veteran known as a "master" teacher, McCoy has 47 students in her classroom—and three adults to help her teach them. One is a first-year teacher, the other two are full-time, full-year student teachers from Baylor.

The set-up is unique—but so is the package known as Hillcrest PDS.

Created three years ago as a partnership between the Waco Independent School District and Baylor University, Hillcrest is a magnet school in an urban setting.

Its 300 students are African-American, Hispanic, and white, in roughly equal proportions. Its 11 master teachers are all veterans looking for new ways to get the job done. Its mission: to reach each child each and every way it can.

To that end, Hillcrest has:

➤ *Four adults in every classroom.* The low student-teacher ratio allows for a lot of individual attention—and a high likelihood that each child will find at least one adult in the room to bond with.

"Having four adults is nice," says McCoy. "We don't have any big you's and little I's—we just get along like one big happy family, planning and teaching together."

➤ *A mix of educational perspectives.* The professional development school concept unites theory and practice, mixing university research with both youthful enthusiasm and years of classroom experience.

➤ *Multiage grouping.* Most classes mix students from three grade-levels. Children often work in cooperative learning groups, and curriculum is integrated and thematic.

McCoy's curriculum for third, fourth, and fifth graders is based on three units: "All About Me," "U.S. History," and "Land, Sea, and Air."

➤ *Teachers in charge, principal on the side.* "The teachers here get together and make the rules of this school," says master teacher Sandra Jennings. "We set the agenda at faculty meetings, we participate in hiring decisions, and we are treated as professionals."

Left, education professor Tom Proctor teaches kids—and student teachers. Below, veteran teacher Sandra Jennings (center) shares her teaching load with first-year teacher Melle Bain (left) and student teacher Rhanda Raeke.

➤ *An adopted business partner.* Waco is home to the nation's largest candy factory—M&M Mars. Employees there donate time to help run the Kids Institute of Technology, an evening program to help parents and children learn to use computers.

➤ *A variety of settings.* In addition to the classroom, Hillcrest students have the benefit of a garden, a pond, numerous area field trips, and something new called "The Everywhere School." During school vacations (the year-round school is open 60 days, then closed 20), kids can venture farther. So far, students have gone to Colorado to learn about apple orchards and to Louisiana to study Cajun culture and the ecosystems of swamps.

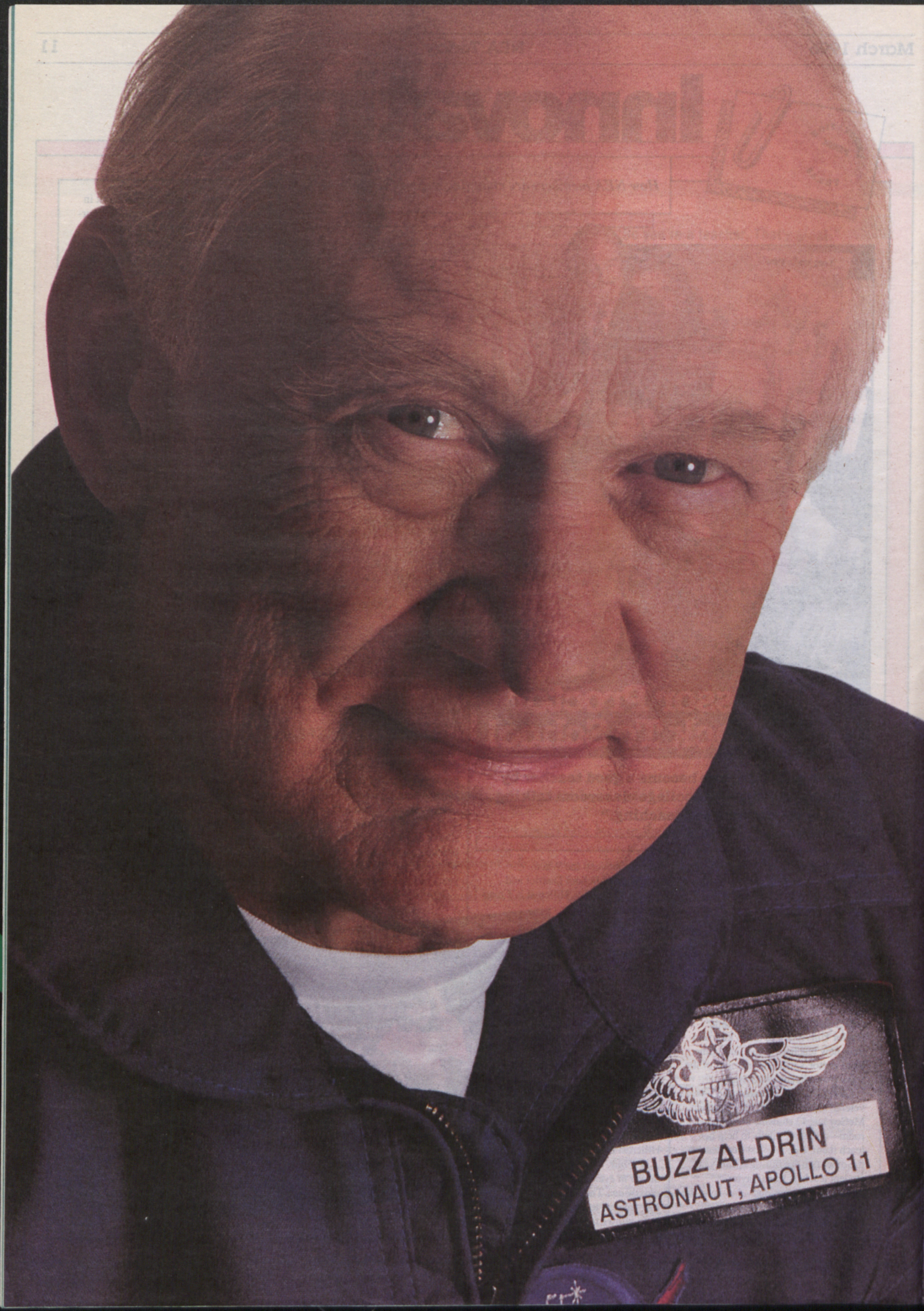
It all adds up. Last year, Hillcrest students posted a 96.9 percent attendance rate and huge gains on achievement tests. In Waco, that means bonus pay. Each Hillcrest employee—principal to custodian—got a 6.75 percent bonus, for a grand total of $55,000.

The money's nice, McCoy says, but the real payoff is the kids. "We want them to have a different shine when they leave here," she says. "We want them to stand out."

—*Stefanie Weiss*

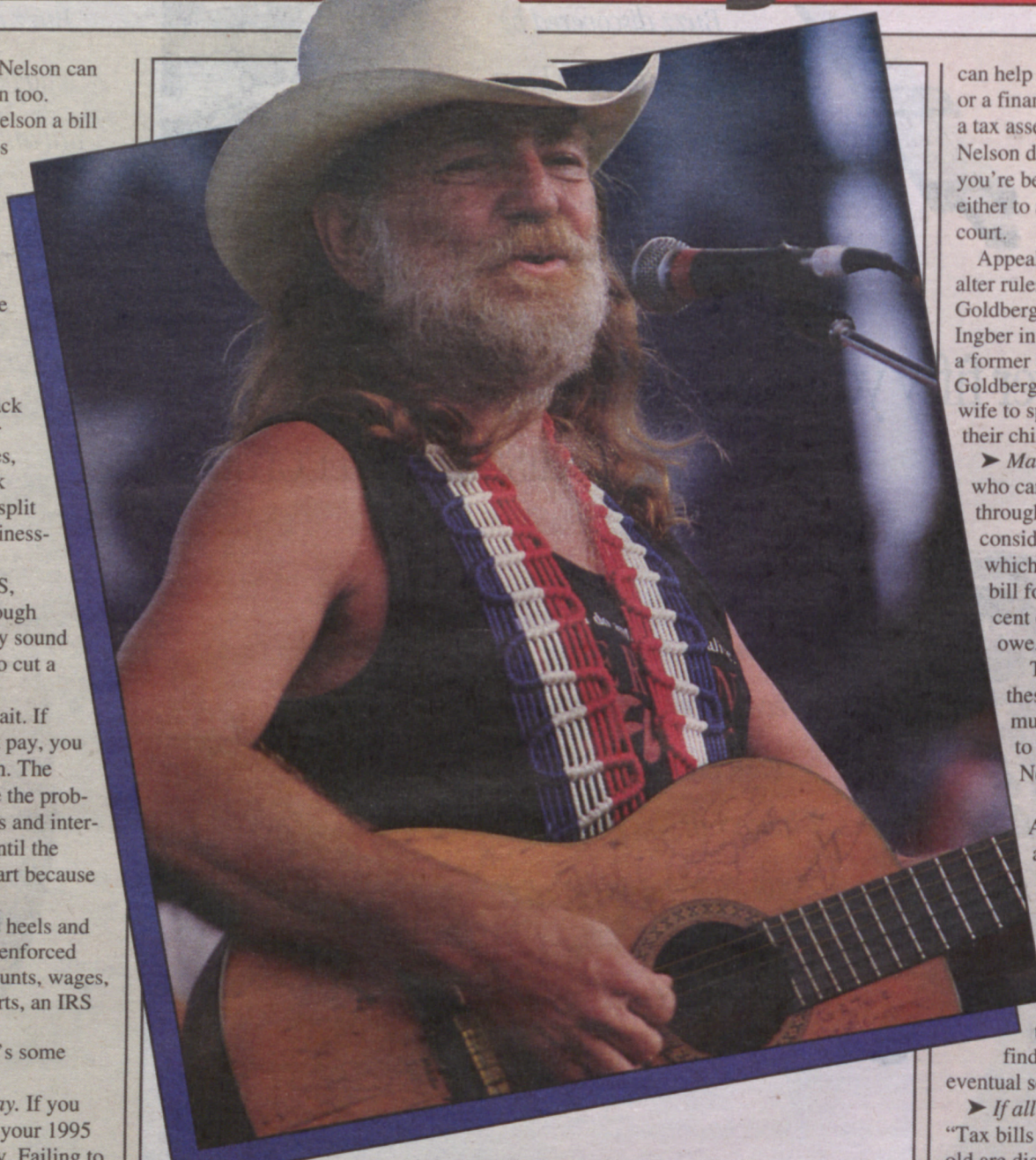
Photographs by Joan Sheehan

Hillcrest PDS is a charter member of NEA's Professional Development School Network. For more on the school, contact principal Ron McIntire, Hillcrest PDS, 4225 Pine Ave., Waco, Texas 76710, 817/772-4286. For more on the network, contact Sylvia Seidel, NEA National Center for Innovation, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.


BUZZ ALDRIN
ASTRONAUT, APOLLO 11

Of course, he didn't have a mouse. Or a laser printer. And math problems took forever, using his trusty slide rule.
But with this tool, Buzz discovered he could compute large equations. And this inspired, challenged and interested him.
Years later, at MIT, Buzz discovered how to perform more advanced calculations, to help guide spacecraft in orbit.
Over fifty years ago, student Buzz Aldrin discovered computing.
Then, in 1969, Buzz discovered something even more exciting than navigating a spacecraft: the feeling of standing there, looking at one. After you've just parked it on the moon.
At Apple, we're providing a new generation of tools to help today's students make their own important discoveries.

Money



Singing the IRS Blues

If you can't pay your taxes or, worse, owe taxes from previous years, don't fret. Here are some tips for digging your way out of debt.

If country singer Willie Nelson can survive the IRS, you can too. In 1990, the IRS sent Nelson a bill for $32 million in back taxes and penalties. It took a few years, a record album with all profits paid directly to the IRS, and a few fire sales, but he settled his debt gratefully for 28 cents on the dollar.

Few individuals get bills for $32 million—but about 4 million Americans owe back taxes. The IRS, which never overlooks such delinquencies, estimates that it's owed back taxes of about $156 billion, split roughly evenly between businesses and individuals.

If you're in debt to the IRS, there is help available. Although negotiating with the IRS may sound frightening, there are ways to cut a deal with the agency.

Whatever you do, don't wait. If you owe taxes that you can't pay, you should take immediate action. The worst thing to do is to ignore the problem, in part because penalties and interest will continue to add up until the issue is addressed—and in part because the IRS will come after you.

"If the taxpayer digs in his heels and does nothing, then we begin enforced collection, seizing bank accounts, wages, or property," says Don Roberts, an IRS spokesman.

So what can you do? Here's some quick advice:

➤ *File even if you can't pay.* If you don't have the money to pay your 1995 taxes, file your return anyway. Failing to file is a more serious offense than failing to pay.

"When you fail to file, there is a penalty of 5 percent a month or any fraction of a month in addition to the other interest and penalties," says Wilson Fadely, an IRS spokesman.

➤ *Pay on the installment plan.* If your problem is a temporary cash crunch that affects just 1995 taxes, ask for an installment agreement. File your return on April 15 and attach Form 9465, which is a request for an installment agreement. This form, available for the first time in 1994, asks you to indicate what you will pay each month. "It has to be reasonable," notes Fadely.

The IRS promises to respond within 30 days, informing you whether your agreement is acceptable. You must still pay interest and penalties as well as a $43 user fee for entering into the agreement.

➤ *Try to negotiate.* If you've already received a bill for back taxes from the IRS, you can go into an IRS office and ask for a meeting with a revenue officer. In this scenario, you have less control than with the installment agreement. "We might say that you have to take money out of your bank account or sell some assets," Fadely says.

➤ *Call the IRS problem-solvers.* If the issue surrounding your taxes is a technical one, the best place to start is the IRS problems resolutions program. Call 800/829-1040 or 800/829-3676.

This program has two parts. The first is for people with nuts-and-bolts problems, ranging from an inability to get an answer from the IRS to the failure to get a refund in a timely manner. The second part is for taxpayers seeking relief from enforcement actions because of hardship.

"People usually call the problems resolution office either when they try to work with the system and are tangled up in red tape, or when they have a hardship such as a medical emergency and can't pay their taxes," says Steven Pyrek, an IRS spokesman.

Once you get the IRS on the line, you may want to ask for a copy of *Your Rights as a Taxpayer.*

➤ *File an appeal or head to tax court.* Although the problems resolution office can help if you have a technical problem or a financial emergency, it can't change a tax assessment. If you feel—as Willie Nelson did—that you don't owe what you're being asked to pay, you must go either to an appeals officer or to tax court.

Appeals officers have broad powers to alter rules, according to Seymour Goldberg, a tax lawyer at Goldberg & Ingber in Garden City, Long Island, and a former appeals officer. For example, Goldberg once permitted a husband and wife to split the dependent deduction for their child.

➤ *Make your best offer.* Taxpayers who can't resolve their problems through any of these avenues might consider an "offer in compromise," which is an offer to settle your tax bill for something less than 100 percent of what the IRS claims you owe.

The IRS revised its policy on these offers in 1992, making them much easier to achieve, according to Laurence Goldfein, Willie Nelson's attorney.

The offer must be reasonable. And it can't be less than your assets. If a taxpayer owes $100,000 in back taxes and has $20,000 in assets, "I'll offer the $20,000," tax lawyer Goldberg says.

Offers that have been accepted are public information. You can read them and find out the initial tax bill and the eventual settlement.

➤ *If all else fails, file bankruptcy.* "Tax bills that are more than three years old are dischargeable in bankruptcy provided there is no fraud and penalty involved, and it doesn't involve payroll tax or trust fund money," Goldberg says.

Top Tax Software on Sale

If you're looking for the easiest way to prepare your 1995 taxes, look no further. This year, you can buy America's best-selling tax software at a special price.

The NEA Professional Library has negotiated a discount for NEA members who wish to purchase TurboTax or MacInTax—two software packages from Intuit, makers of Quicken. The price: $29.95.

Also available: deluxe CD-ROM editions (Windows and Mac only) for $39.95 and software to help you handle your state taxes for $19.95. Shipping and handling charges will be added to all orders.

For more information or to place an order, call Intuit at 800/964-1040, ext. 500254. You must use the extension to get the NEA-member discount.

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People

Up in the Air

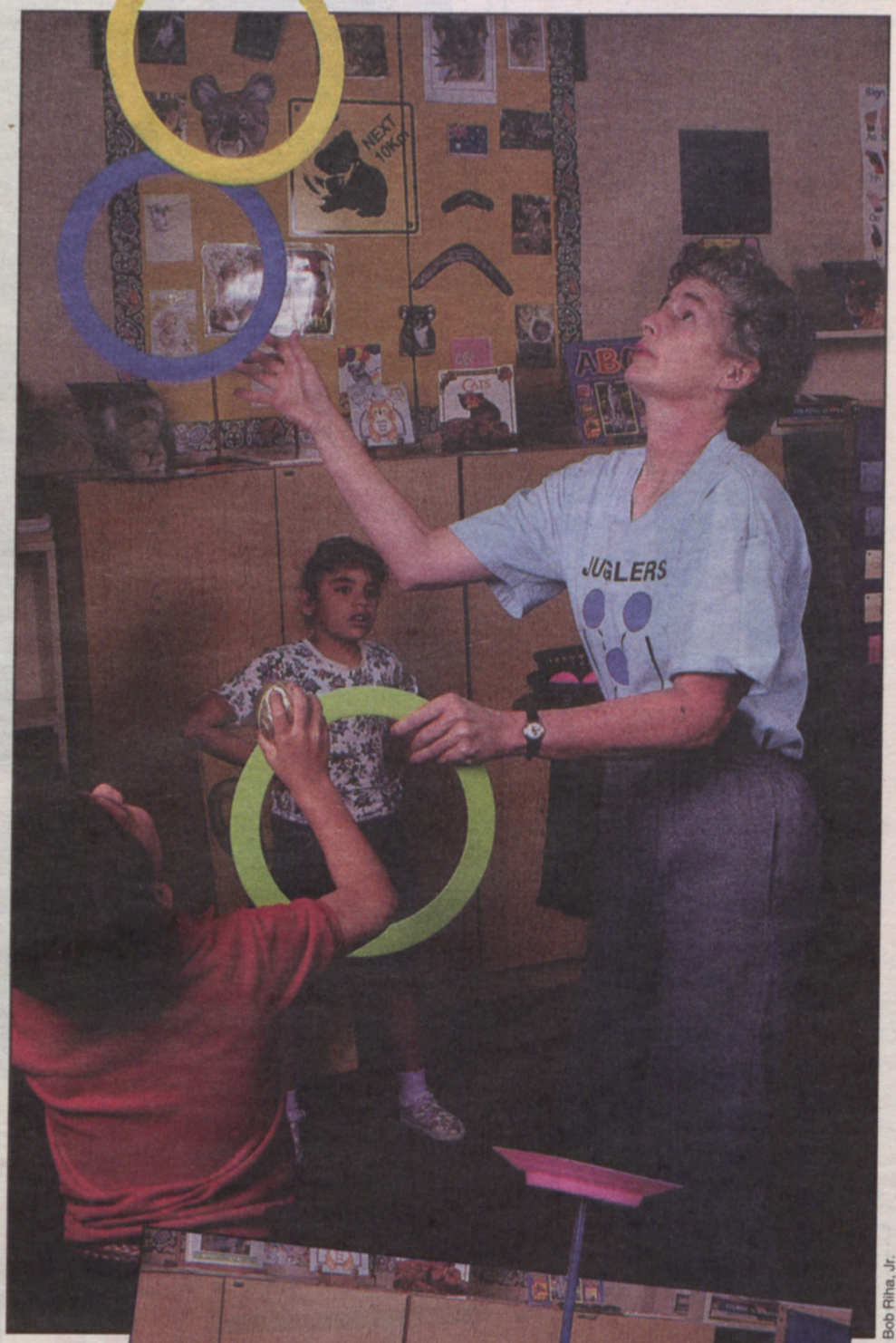
Everyone at Merced Elementary in Rancho Cucamonga knows that **Mary E. Wilkins** can juggle the books.

But there's no scandal. The 21-year special ed veteran is known for juggling balls, rings, and other paraphernalia as well.

Wilkins, who's been juggling since she was a child, has amassed the world's third-largest collection of works on juggling. She's a talented juggler herself. And since she's well-known in the juggling community, she frequently hosts jugglers on tour.

"On campus, they call me 'the juggling lady,'" laughs Wilkins. She has taught many of her students and teacher-colleagues to juggle, and she's performed at school fairs and talent shows.

"Why keep a great hobby like this to yourself?" says Wilkins, who often takes students to national juggling festivals. "It's much more fun to share it with others."



Bob Riha, Jr.

Craig Cunningham

Ghosts Busted

Thanks to custodian **Loretta Litteral**, the students of Carter Elementary School in Carter City, Kentucky enjoy a dust-free, ghost-free environment.

Yes, Litteral has won an award for good housekeeping and has spent 17 years keeping the halls and building clean.

But "what really impresses the students is that I've worked in a school they're convinced is haunted," Litteral notes with a smile.

"They say they hear balls bouncing in the gym and ask me or my co-worker, Robert Skaggs, to check it out and chase the ghosts away. So we do that, sweeping the halls clean of ghosts as well as dust." The kids, of course, call them "ghostbusters."

"I get a real kick out of it, because the students see us as their protectors," says Litteral. "And we really are. We make sure their school is safe to walk in and learn in. That's our stock in trade."

Toe to Toe, Coast to Coast

Minnesota teacher **Sara Laird** and her husband, Doug, didn't quite make history riding a tandem bike cross country. They copied it.

James and Elisabeth Young first made the trek from coast to coast in 1938 (see inset photo). Forty-five years later, the Lairds discovered Elisabeth's published diary of the trip, *Bicycle Built for Two*, on a dusty library shelf.

It inspired them to dream. The dream became a 52-day, 3,218-mile reality last summer—and the power of dreams became "the theme of the trip," says Sara.

They encouraged others to dream, too. "Our first day out, we were pelted by a hail storm in Napa Valley," Sara recalls. "We took shelter in a barn with some farm workers, and the only one who spoke English was a sixth grade boy. I pumped him full of ideas."

Back at Oak Point Intermediary in Eden Prairie, Sara uses the trip to pump her sixth graders full of history, geography, math—and inspiration. "At this age, kids are ready to develop their own dreams," she says, "and begin to work toward them, too."

Jeff Adrian

Charlie Reedle

Cannes Due?

In rural Grinnell, Kansas, **Ramsey Stecklein**'s fourth graders carried away first prize in the 1994 Kansas Film Festival, carving up $750 into savings bonds.

Their winning video, a "comedy western" titled *In Over Your Head and Six Feet Under*, features the kids of Angelus Elementary in a story about a hardware store clerk killed by a gang.

Stecklein, who filmed and edited the production, proudly notes that his students trounced entries from more-populous Eastern Kansas and Missouri. And the cinematographic experience "gave them a chance to act—the shy ones got a chance to get in front of people, speak, and perform—and to develop latent talent," he reports. "The kids also learned about props, lighting, and how movies are made."

This year, Stecklein's students are "in production" again. The tight-lipped producer, who already has 25 minutes of footage in the can, will only reveal that the project is a "fourth grade *film noir*."

'A Detour to a New Beginning'

When New Jersey biology teacher and athletic coach **Richard Ruffalo** lost his sight due to a degenerative eye condition in 1981, he says he became an "angry, vicious, and vehement man" who wanted to quit teaching.

But his strong spiritual beliefs and the help of his principal and colleagues at Belleville Senior High School compelled him to persevere.

"Life takes many twists and turns," he says. "For me, adversity was a detour to a new beginning."

With renewed determination, Ruffalo won world titles in shot put, discus, javelin, and power lifting. He set nine world records and was named 1988 Disabled Athlete of the Year by the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Ruffalo's indomitable spirit inspires students, and for this he was named 1995 Outstanding Teacher of the Year by the American Teacher Awards program, sponsored by Disney and McDonald's.

Speaking across the country, Ruffalo tells audiences, "Life is like a book. We have to convince our children to keep turning the pages because there are better chapters to come."

Rachelle Omenson

RESOURCES

TV Tips

Space Cases—*Nickelodeon, March 2, 9:30-10 p.m.* This adventure-comedy, set to take place two centuries in the future, features five students from different parts of the galaxy who learn to work as a team while facing the daunting dangers of space.

Doug Huyn/Turner Pics

Andersonville—*TNT, Part 1 airs Sunday, March 3; Part 2 airs Monday, March 4, 8-10 p.m. ET both nights.* The dramatic story of Andersonville, the legendary Confederate prisoner-of-war camp, where 45,000 Union soldiers were imprisoned, and almost 13,000 died.

Barney Safety—*PBS, check local listings for the airdates and times.* Barney and his friends share valuable safety tips on such topics as fire safety, seat belt safety, and playing safely by wearing helmets.

Smart Living—*CNBC, March 3, 4:30-5 a.m. ET.* This show covers how to get financial aid for college, what to look for when buying a used car, how to avoid dangerous products on the market, and how to make sure you're not victimized by consumer fraud.

The Alamo—*Discovery, March 3, 9 p.m. ET.* The story of the battle at the Alamo is told through diaries of its defenders, the artwork of Davey Crockett, and film footage of the site. For the Discovery Network Educator's Guide, call 800/321-1832 or visit Discovery Channel School Online at http://www.discovery.com/school.

Sexual Considerations—*CBS Schoolbreak Special, March 5, 4-5 p.m. ET.* This program dramatizes sexual harassment in the life of a high school student who has to threaten to sue to get help. Get a free study guide (produced by KIDSNET for CBS) from CBS Community and Educational Services, 51 W. 52nd St., New York, NY 10019.

Craig Sjodin/ABC

Educating Mom—*ABC Afterschool Special, March 14, 4-5 p.m. ET.* When a mother decides to go back to high school, she and her family go through the pains of adjusting to the new situation. Call 800/647-4ABC for a free subscription to the ABC Classroom Connection.

ABC

Rhythm and Jam—*ABC Saturday Special, March 23 and 30, 12:30-1 p.m. ET.* Hosted by rapper Kool Moe Dee, this two-part program explores music's universality. The first part's on rhythm; the second part's on melody and harmony.

A Rugrats Passover—*Nickelodeon, March 30, 7:30-8 p.m. ET; April 2, 6:30-7 p.m. ET; and April 7, 10-10:30 a.m. ET.* While visiting their grandparents' house for the holiday, the Rugrats venture to the attic for toys but end up locked in with grandpa, who recounts the Passover story.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a computerized clearinghouse for children's radio and television programming in Washington, D.C.

Ahead on *Teacher TV*

Looking for some proven classroom strategies? Then tune in to *Teacher TV*, the award-winning weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and the Learning Channel. *Teacher TV* airs Sundays at 12:30 p.m. ET. Here's a list of topics set for upcoming episodes:

March 3: Effective Discipline Strategies
March 10: Integrating Technology
March 17: Dealing With Disasters
March 24: Student Self-Esteem
March 31: Teaching to the Brain

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RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

SCIENCE

Science, Society, and America's Nuclear Waste, a free curriculum, is available from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. This second edition includes a teacher's guide and student reader. Other documents and publications are also available. Call 800/225-6972 or find them at http://www.ymp.gov.

PERSONAL FINANCE

A Complete Guide to Mortgages. Here's a handy guide that covers the state of today's mortgage market, explains the different types of mortgages available, and tells you how to find one that's right for you. Available from NEA Member Benefits at no charge to NEA members. Call 800/637-4636 to get your free copy. Available in limited quantities.

STUDENT HEALTH

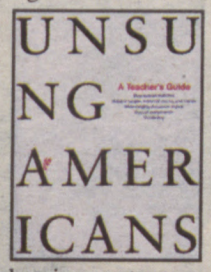
Asthma and Physical Activity in the School. This free 20-page booklet offers practical information about physical education for school-age children with asthma, including tips for helping students control asthma, and how to recognize symptoms and attacks. NIH Publication No. 95-3651. Order this and other materials from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD 20824-0105.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

Animal Tracks. A three-part conservation education program—activity guide, book, and online activity—for grades 4 to 6—from the National Wildlife Federation. To order the **activity guide** (pictured here), $9.95 plus s&h, contact the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven CT 06516, 800/229-4200. To order the **children's text**, $5 plus s&h (discounts for quantities), contact NWF at 1400 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 800/432-6564. For online information and activities on the Internet, go to http://www.nwf.org/nwf.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Unsung Americans. A new series that captures the lives and legacies of four noteworthy people: Chief Joseph, Woodie Guthrie, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy Day. Teacher's guide includes a biographic sketch, related events and places, discussion topics, and special assignments. Each biography is $10.95, s&h included. The teacher's guide is $14.95, s&h included. Order from Ward Hill Press, P.O. Box 04-0424, Staten Island, NY 10304 or call 718/816-9449. Suggested age level is 10 and up.



CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Caring for Your School-Age Child. New from the American Academy of Pediatrics. This 624-page parenting manual and health encyclopedia addresses the unique needs of children ages 5 to 12, providing comprehensive coverage of health, safety, emotional, developmental, and learning issues. Only $19.95 plus $4.95 s&h—30% off the bookstore price. To order, call 800/433-9016 or mail a check to AAP Publications, P.O. Box 927, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927.

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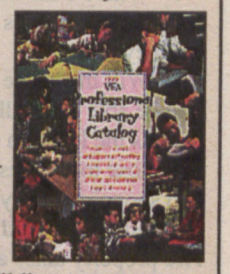

IDEA EXCHANGE

The Candy Tax

To teach students how the colonists might have viewed taxation without representation, I give each student 10 candies. On cards we write things my fifth graders have at school—tennis shoes, jeans, glasses, white socks—and assign each a taxation value (one candy, two candies, etc.).

One student then takes on the role of king and three become tax collectors. Kids really get upset as the collectors follow the king's orders and do their jobs. It gets the point across. Afterwards we divide up the goods and eat them.

Alice Howe
Laurel Elementary School
Fort Collins, Colorado
AliceH1119@aol.com

Flying High

Students in my middle school gifted and talented program and Mary Kay Grasso's fifth grade class at Downing Elementary School have been learning telecommunications skills through a project we posted in the Electronic School House on America Online.

Called "Flying High," the project launches students into cyberspace to research kites. As we learned to communicate via e-mail, online chats, and postings in various folders, students from across the country sent us information, stories, and poems about kites.

For each school that corresponded with us, we've sent two kite kits with the materials needed to assemble the sails for two sled kites. We've flown kites we made ourselves at school and are now finalizing plans to go to the Smithsonian's Kite-Flying Festival in Washington, D.C. on March 30.

The children are having great fun and learning a lot as they research the history and principles of flight both online and in the library.

Linda Hurd
Mary E. Volz Middle School
Runnemede, New Jersey
Lhurd456@aol.com

Oklahoma City Tribute

Every year I ask my second graders to rewrite old sayings and come up with original words of wisdom. They come up with clever and imaginative offerings like "you can lead a horse to water . . . but you can't take a skunk anywhere" or "a penny saved . . . makes cents."

This year, we took it a step further. Inspired by the fundraising efforts for the families of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing, students suggested we make and sell refrigerator magnets with the slogans and donate the money to the Victims & Relief Fund. A student with entrepreneurial parents volunteered them to produce the magnets.

When the magnets were ready, students formed an assembly line to package them. Then they began selling—to aunts, uncles, friends, and neighbors. All told, they collected $600. They wrote a letter to the governor of Oklahoma and sent the money to the fund.

Last May, I went to Oklahoma City and left their sayings at a shrine that's been erected at the site.

Susan Burney
Truman Elementary School
St. Louis, Missouri

All the News That Fits

As an educational technologist, I work with third grade teacher Marilyn Feeney and her students (pictured right) to publish an illustrated newspaper, which we distribute to the entire school three times a year.

Students write articles about class projects, school functions, or literature projects, and usually eight students per publication write autobiographies.

Six students at a time come to the technology center, where I help them enter their articles into a word processing application called the Writing Center. The kids get computer experience by using the mouse, tab key, pull-down menus to make choices, highlighting, boldfacing, and underlining.

I use the Writing Center to lay out the publication, let Marilyn do the final editing, and send the finished product to the district print shop.

Exposing young learners to this technology sets a good foundation for more advanced projects—like multimedia presentations—in the intermediate grades.

Karen Davis
Centennial Elementary School
Lewiston, Idaho
Kdavis1002@aol.com

Share *Your* Ideas

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today*'s 2.2 million readers in one of these four ways:

➤By mail to Idea Exchange, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
➤By phone, 202/822-7201.
➤By fax, 202/822-7206.
➤By NEA Online, keyword *NEA Today*.

Retirement

Making the Right Move

Maybe it's a little house on the prairie or a bungalow at the beach, but whatever your retirement fantasy, now's the time to make sure the reality measures up.

To move or not to move? It's one of the biggest choices you'll face as you get close to retirement age.

Three out of four retirees in America stay put, according to John Howells, author of *Retirement Choices* (Gateway Books). Others can't wait to leave.

As you decide whether to stay or go, ask yourself a few questions:

➤ Are friends and family members staying, or are they likely to move?

➤ Where's the neighborhood headed? Are property values stable and rising, or are they falling?

➤ Will the house feel too large? Will you be able to handle the maintenance?

➤ Is the location right for you? Are you close to sources of entertainment and shopping? Do you like the climate?

➤ Have you paid off your mortgage? Are property taxes affordable?

The bottom line is, if you're happy in your current home, it's affordable, and you can picture yourself living there comfortably as you get older, staying put may be the best move for you.

But if you decide to retire elsewhere, you should begin planning right away. If you're considering selling your house, you may qualify for the $125,000 exclusion, a one-time tax break for seniors that allows you to exclude from taxable income up to $125,000 of profit from the sale of a home if you or your spouse is age 55 or older.

The next decision is whether to buy or rent your new home. There are pros and cons to each option.

In general, buying is best for people who need a tax shelter, and those who want to establish a new home base. Renting is best for people who don't intend to settle down for any length of time, those who can't afford a down payment, and those who don't want maintenance responsibilities.

Whether you decide to buy or rent, carefully evaluate the house, condo, apartment, or retirement community you're considering. Look for features that will make your life easier later on, such as one level or short stairs, central heating and air conditioning, labor- and money-saving appliances, large bathrooms, and adequate security.

Next decision: Where do you want that retirement home to be?

Start by asking yourself a few more questions. Is there someplace you've always wanted to live? What recreational activities do you enjoy? Do you prefer a certain climate? Do you want to travel?

Next, begin reading books, magazines, and newspapers to get some idea of your options. One good source is Rand McNally's *Places Rated Retirement Guide* by Richard Boyer and David Savageau, which compares information on housing, taxes, health care, and costs for retirement.

Once you've come up with a few potential retirement spots, visit them and judge them personally. Plan on making at least two visits to the same location, including one during the off-season so you can see the area at its worst—Florida in summer, for example.

Kathryn and Ross Petras, authors of *The Only Retirement Guide You'll Ever Need* (Poseidon Press), advise rating potential retirement spots using the following criteria:

➤ Climate. Most retirees prefer mild temperatures, moderate humidity, and no weather extremes.

➤ Geography. Many retirees prefer to live in small cities or in towns near large cities. Some also prefer to be near the ocean, lakes, or mountains.

➤ People. Most retirees prefer living in a community that includes a lot of other retirees. You may also want to look for areas that have a significant number of newcomers, which will make it easier to adjust.

➤ Recreational and cultural facilities. Look for a community that offers activities you're interested in.

➤ Housing. Look at the type of neighborhood and housing you want. Assess the costs, availability, property taxes, and maintenance fees.

➤ Health Care. Look for good hospitals and easy access to health care.

➤ Taxes. Before moving to another state, look into the tax implications. Check the rate structure in the state. Some state income tax systems provide for a personal exemption, and some states allow for an additional exemption or credit for older taxpayers.

Many states allow you to exclude some types of income, such as pensions or Social Security, from taxable income. A few states don't levy a traditional state income tax. However, they may tax capital gains and dividends, which can be significant for older people.

A good way to estimate a state's tax impact is to get a copy of its tax return and fill it out. You can get a copy from the state's Department of Revenue.

Looking Good

Some top retirement choices recommended by experts in the field:

➤ The Ozarks in Arkansas and Missouri offer a low crime rate, low costs, a temperate climate, and recreational opportunities.

➤ Florida's Gulf Coast (Naples to St. Petersburg) offers a sunny, warm climate, major medical facilities, and many other retirees. Crime and housing costs can be high.

➤ Chapel Hill, North Carolina is a small town but boasts many cultural activities, universities, medical facilities, and sports activities.

➤ Seattle, Washington is a thriving, livable city with cool summers and cool, rainy winters, excellent medical facilities, many colleges, and an excellent cultural life. The crime rate is rising, as are real estate prices.

A variety of member benefits are available to NEA-R members through NEA-Retired and NEA Member Benefits. For more information on NEA Member Benefits programs, call toll-free 800/637-4636.

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Legal

Second in a two-part series.

Get Off!

Congress is considering legislation that would strap a 600-pound gorilla to the back of every public school teacher in the country.

The gorilla's name is the Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act of 1995 (PRA).

It's hard to say what PRA would do, but—at a minimum—the legislation, now pending in Congress, would give every parent the right to force the public schools to provide their children with a "customized" education.

This would include the right to opt in or out of any course they choose, require the adoption of a race- or religion-friendly curriculum, ban books, require the admission of their children to a particular school or special program, and force the state to pay for private school tuition.

Oh, by the way, if parents don't like what their children are being taught, they'd also be able sue teachers and other school officials for money damages and attorney's fees.

The proposed legislation recognizes "parental rights" as a federally protected, fundamental right. Specifically, the bill provides that no government official—including teachers and other educational employees—"shall interfere with or usurp the right of a parent to direct . . . the education of the child."

What does that phrase mean? No one—not even supporters of PRA—knows because the legislation gives the courts the task of defining, on a case-by-case basis, the scope of a parent's right to "direct" the education of a child.

In a very real sense, PRA would give federal judges—rather than locally elected school boards—the power to decide how the public schools will be run.

What's the purpose of this bill? In a nutshell, supporters want to give parents veto power over what their children are taught. The reason they've asked Congress for help is that the courts have refused to buy their argument that the federal Constitution guarantees that right.

To correct the courts' alleged judicial mistakes, the draft legislation provides that plaintiffs who claim a violation of their parental rights will win unless the state defendant can prove a "compelling state interest."

The "compelling state interest" test is the toughest legal burden in the field of constitutional law, and it's applied only in the rarest of cases involving fundamental rights such as freedom of speech or religion. As a practical matter, state defendants usually lose cases in which the "compelling state interest" test is applied.

Here's a sampling of the court decisions supporters of the Parental Rights and Responsibilities Act hope will be decided differently if the proposed legislation is enacted.

➤ Years ago, the parents in *Mozert v. Hawkins County Public Schools* objected to the public school curriculum because it included the reading series *Impressions*. When the school district refused to provide an alternative, the parents enrolled their children in a private religious school and sued the district for violating their parental rights, as well as the right to religious freedom.

The federal district court ruled in their favor, awarding more than $50,000, mostly as reimbursement for private school tuition. The court of appeals reversed that decision, however, concluding that there is no constitutional right to opt out of required courses. To hold otherwise, the court said, would "leave public education in shreds."

The attorney who represented the parents in *Mozert* was Michael Farris—no coincidence, he also drafted PRA.

➤ In another "opt out" case decided just last October, the First Circuit Court of Appeals rejected parents' claim that a Massachusetts school district violated their parental rights by requiring their children to attend a 90-minute AIDS awareness program.

In a comment particularly relevant to the current debate, the court said, "If all parents had a fundamental right to dictate individually what the schools teach their children, the schools would be forced to cater a curriculum for each student whose parents had genuine moral disagreements with the school's choice of subject matter. We cannot see that the Constitution imposes such a burden on state educational systems."

Enactment of PRA will overrule this holding and impose just such a burden on the public schools. In fact, witnesses at a Senate hearing on PRA specifically cited this case as one that should be overturned.

➤ In another case, a group of parents convinced a federal judge to ban 44 textbooks from use in Alabama's public schools because the books did not adequately credit the "role of Christianity in the United States and the world."

Although that decision was reversed on appeal, it didn't stop African-American parents from asking a federal judge to order the New York City school board to adopt a new curriculum that "gives greater weight" to the historical contributions of African-Americans. Finding no constitutional violation, the court refused.

➤ Apparently, PRA supporters also want to rein in state workers—including school employees—who are required to report and investigate allegations of child sexual abuse.

In one case decided last July, a Pennsylvania federal court said that parents couldn't sue a school principal for asking their daughter about possible abuse at home.

But Farris, who has sued child protective service workers for investigating allegations of parental child abuse, thinks PRA is needed to curb such investigations. He testified before Congress that "it will be good" if PRA "gives social workers some pause."

➤ PRA supporters also point to *Newkirk v. Fink* as an example of judges misapplying the parental rights doctrine. In that case, decided last year, a federal appellate court held that parents could not sue a school counselor for counseling their son without parental consent.

In other unsuccessful lawsuits:

➤ A parent from Washington State sued a teacher for being late to a meeting and refusing to let the parent photocopy her lesson plans.

➤ Pennsylvania parents sought money damages for the "severe emotional distress" their daughter allegedly suffered as the result of a compulsory health education class.

➤ Parents in Arkansas and Wisconsin challenged decisions not to admit their children to the National Honor Society.

➤ Parents in Oklahoma and Florida sued to have their children transferred to different school districts altogether.

➤ Colorado parents sued the local school board for damages for allegedly failing "to teach morality."

➤ And a Pennsylvania mother sued because her daughter wasn't admitted to an education program for the gifted.

Another "side effect" of PRA likely will be to invalidate all state regulation of home schools. After all, Michael Farris, the bill's author, is head of the Home School Legal Defense Association and has spent the last 10 years challenging such state laws all over the country.

It's still unclear whether PRA has a chance of passage. Look to future issues of *NEA Today* for updates.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

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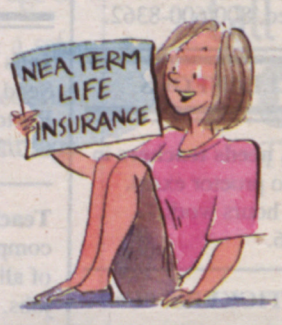

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BOOK BEAT

Soul for Sale

Some insights from a new biography of public school profiteer Chris Whittle.

An Empire Undone: The Wild Rise and Hard Fall of Chris Whittle
Vance H. Trimble

Birch Lane Press, Carol Publishing Group, 371 pp., $24.95

Channel One founder Chris Whittle made his name in the business world by creating new ways to sell ads. Like it or not, it took quite a mind to think of a way to sell soda and sneakers to schoolkids in homeroom.

A new biography traces Whittle's life (he's now 48) from "son of a country doctor," to multimillionaire super salesman, to education entrepreneur, to financial failure and fallen star.

Sounds interesting, but let's face it: You probably don't want to read a book about Chris Whittle. Neither did I. This one, written with his cooperation, is far too kind to be much fun.

So save your $25. Here's the good stuff:

➤ Whittle built a $200 million company with a lot of help, a lot of luck, and a lot of gall.

➤ Whittle's ultimate goal was, at one time, to become President of the United States. Short of that, he believes his life mission is to save American education.

➤ It was a teacher in a Whittle-sponsored focus-group who provided the idea for Channel One. "I wonder why nobody's ever done like a "Today" show for teenagers in the homeroom," she said.

➤ Whittle's company fell apart because of lavish spending, bad business decisions, bad timing, and extreme arrogance. Another firm, KIII, bought the still-profitable Channel One, now shown to 8 million students in 12,000 American schools.

➤ Whittle lured Benno Schmidt away from his job as president of Yale by offering him $1 million a year to run the Edison project. (In Whittle's mind, Edison is a network of 1,000 private schools built from scratch. In reality, Edison manages a handful of existing public schools for profit.)

➤ When business began to go sour, Whittle managed to keep a single candle burning at the Edison project by selling his $10 million art collection, a $5.8 million apartment in New York City, and a $1 million home in Knoxville.

➤ Hard times haven't broken Whittle—just narrowed his focus. Says author Trimble: He's got "Edison inked in on his calendar for the next 15 years."

Watch out.

—Stefanie Weiss

The NEA Professional Library's Top Ten
NEA Bestsellers

Current Rank		Previous Rank
1	***The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)***, Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (1862-1-10-FB)	[1]
2	***Student Portfolios***, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Insights from your colleagues on how to use portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (2901-1-00-FB)	[3]
3	***Countdown to the First Day of School,*** Schell & Burden. ($4.95) A "must-have" checklist for every beginning elementary teacher. (2150-9-00-FB)	[5]
4	***The Healthy School Handbook: Conquering the Sick Building Syndrome and Other Environmental Hazards in and Around Your School***, Norma L. Miller, ed. ($21.95) Find out how sick school syndrome affects teaching and learning. (1863-X-20-FB)	[4]
5	***Toward Inclusive Classrooms,*** NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Stories on how students with special needs can learn with their peers. (2903-8-00-FB)	[2]
6	***Multi-Age Classrooms***, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Six examples of how mixed-age groupings inspire teachers to innovate. (2907-0-00-FB)	[9]
7	***Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms,*** Merrill Harmin. ($12.95) The best of modern theory and research in a form that works for real teachers in real classrooms. (2950-X-00-FB)	[7]
8	***Portfolios: Assessing Learning in the Primary Grades***, Marianne Lescher. ($4.95) A classroom teacher's unique view of what the research says. (1094-9-00-FB)	
9	***Becoming a Reflective Teacher,*** Leonard Kochendorfer. ($16.95) Helps you critically examine and improve your teaching. (3352-3-00-FB)	
10	***Portfolio Practices: Assessing and Thinking Through Children's Work,*** Project Zero. ($16.95) The nuts and bolts of student portfolios and much more. (1858-3-00-FB)	

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Bike and boat Holland, leisure pace, reasonable. Bike and meals included, 800/600-8362.

MISCELLANEOUS

Nat'l. Assoc. needs teachers in major cities to proctor exam. $100/mo. - 2 hours work. 800/444-7546.

BUMPER STICKERS. *"Children Should be Seen & Not Hurt."* 250/$388; 500/$725; 1,000/$1150. Check w/order. Helen Kaye, 41928 Corte Santa Barbara, Freemont, CA 94539. 510/657-1501/657-3415.

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ByteSize

NEA members using technology to improve education

IN THE CLASSROOM

From the Bottom of the Earth

WHO: Steve Stevenosky, science teacher, Lincoln High School, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

E-MAIL ADRESS: ssteven@wctc.net

WHAT: When the National Science Foundation picked Wisconsin teacher Steve Stevenosky, one of four teachers selected to do research in Antarctica, to be part of a six-week expedition aboard the ice-breaker *RV Nathaniel Palmer*, Stevenosky took his students along . . . sort of. Now, via the Internet, your students can go, too.

INSPIRATION: Each day of the science expedition, I transmitted a report via satellite to my colleague Bob Manthey back at school. Bob took the material and put it up on our school's Web page. The kids responded to me through E-mail sent over the Internet.

Most of our exchanges had to do with science, some with human interest stuff, like my account of a bout of seasickness in 30-foot seas and -30 degree windchills.

CLICK: We're continuing to add pictures and text to the Internet Web site we created for the expedition so people can see how the Antarctica trip went.

We've gotten a great response so far. We know of about 30 schools that have visited the site regularly for updates during the cruise—so have colleges and universities. We've linked our project home page to other Internet sites—the University of Texas is one—so people can get more information about Antarctica on the Internet. The Antarctic Link Project address is part of the Wisconsin Rapids Web page. To get to the project page directly, the address is http://www.wctc.net/-bmanthey/antarc.htm. Through this project, my students have had an opportunity to be part of a global classroom, using the Internet to make the connection.

We did the project using lots of volunteer time and equipment. There were many unsung heroes who believed in me and in the project as something good for kids.

Steve Stevenosky

Antarctica through the lens of science teacher Steve Stevenosky (inset), who was aboard the ice-breaker **RV Nathaniel Palmer,** *all the while communicating with his students back home in Wisconsin.*

BYTES FOR BEGINNERS

Is your local Association involved in technology issues? If not, why not suggest forming a local Association committee to discern members' concerns and interests? Technology has many implications for members—and your local Association can help address them. Some questions to consider:

➤ Is there sufficient access to technology by teachers, staff, and students?

➤ How are decisions made in the selection of technology for instruction?

➤ Is there technical support available to help teachers and staff keep equipment operating?

➤ Is more training in the use of technology needed? What kind of training?

➤ How is the use of technology affecting the curriculum or changing methods of instruction?

➤ Are the computers in your schools linked and networked to communicate among schools?

➤ Are there plans to update equipment, software, and instructional resources regularly?

➤ How are parents involved and informed about the use of technology?

➤ How are issues of security and safety for staff and students addressed?

Many of these issues may be handled by a local Association working jointly with the administration or school board. Others issues may be pursued in collective bargaining. The NEA is developing a survey on technology for local Association use that will be available from your state Association this summer.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

TAKE A TRIP

■ Electronic field trips—sponsored by PBS and Turner Educational Services, Inc.—are two-day, live, interactive events delivered on PBS, satellite or cable. "Science in the Rain Forest" will air April 16 and 17 and "Rockets on Wheels" can be seen May 16 and 17. For details, call 800/639-7797.

THINK BIG

■ ThinkQuest is a contest for 7-12 grade students working in teams and using the Internet. Students can win scholarships of up to $25,000 for designing Web pages. Teachers can win up to $5,000 for themselves and $5,000 for their schools. For more information, visit http://www.advanced.org/ThinkQuest.

HOMEMADE HOME PAGE

■ A new version of Clarisworks 4.0 lets educators and their students who want to publish on the Internet convert documents to Web pages with a new HTML translator. MAC version, $129; Windows 95 version, $40.

RESOURCES

SCIENCE/MATH

■ The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse offers math and science teachers a dozen different electronic resources each month, plus newsletters and other documents. Visit http://www.enc.org.

TECH TALK

■ Find out how technology is changing teaching and learning in NetTeachNews. To read a recent issue and get electronic and print subscription information, visit http://www.chaos.com/netteach.

FREEBEE

■ Free memberships in Ait.net, the online service of the Agency for Instructional Technology, are now available for those wishing to discuss classroom concerns in forums with other teachers, share classroom tips, and exchange lesson plans. Visit http://www.ait.net/.

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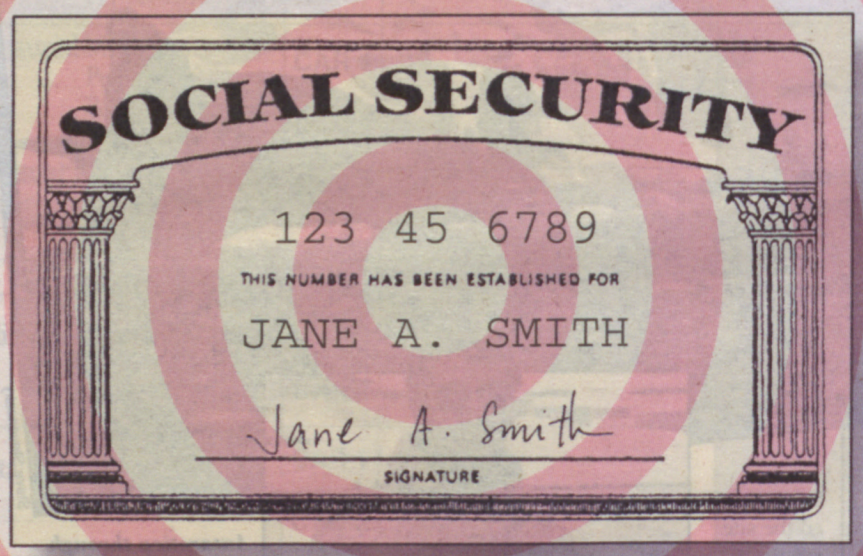

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Health

Information about health factors that affect the w... ...dents learn

Dr. John Udall, Jr. is professor of pediatrics at Louisiana State University Medical Center, clinical professor of pediatrics at Tulane University School of Medicine, and head of nutrition and gastroenterology at Children's Hospital in New Orleans. He spoke recently with NEA Today *on the problem of child malnutrition.*

Is This The Face Of MALNUTRITION?

Some 12 million American children are undernourished. How does that affect their learning? And can you spot them?

How do you know when a child's undernourished and not just plain skinny?
There's a hierarchy of what the body allows in a malnourished state. A child deprived of nutrients will gain energy by breaking down first fat stores and then muscle stores. So one of the first things that happens is that the child fails to gain weight or will actually lose weight.

If decreased nutrient intake goes on long enough, then the child will stop growing in height. And then finally, if it's severe enough and it's early enough in development, brain growth can be affected.

So a physician who suspects malnutrition first takes a complete medical history and tries to assess whether the diet of the given child is adequate. Then comes a physical examination, including measuring head circumference, height, and weight.

Given that we have meal programs in the schools, why are there so many undernourished children?
In pockets of poverty, the school lunch that children receive may be very important—a major contributor to their overall nutrient intake. But if a child's getting just one good meal a day, that's not sufficient.

People should realize that the nutrient needs of younger children are much greater than the needs of adolescents and adults. A newborn infant needs between 110 and 120 calories per kilogram body weight (that's 2.2 pounds) per day, versus 25 to 35 calories for an adult. For a child, the needs are three times that of an adult, when expressed per unit of body weight.

So without adequate nutrition, children will become malnourished much more quickly than teenagers or adults because their needs are greater.

How does being undernourished affect a child's learning ability?
Undernourishment impacts learning globally.

Take one isolated example—iron deficiency. Iron is necessary for a number of enzymes to work normally. It can greatly impact strength, activity, alertness, and also the ability to respond to a structured test.

Without adequate iron, children start depleting their iron stores in the bone marrow and the liver to help make red blood cells. Eventually, they become anemic. They're more susceptible to fatigue, and their physical work performance decreases. And then finally, iron deficiency affects them mentally, in their thought processes.

That's just one nutrient out of many.

Is a malnourished child always thin?
Malnutrition is poor nutrition. So that means an obese person can be poorly nourished but not necessarily undernourished.

Some restrictive diets may provide sufficient calories—so a person wouldn't look thin—yet they can result in malnutrition because of a deficiency of trace minerals.

Sometimes, adolescents will decide they want to become vegetarian. Individuals in societies where vegetarianism has been practiced for generations know what is important when combining nutrients and foodstuffs from various vegetable groups and non-animal products. But adolescents who just decide on their own to become vegetarians are at risk for undernutrition and nutrient deficiencies.

How would you battle malnutrition in the United States?
Sound education concerning what makes a healthy diet is number one. A child's diet should be based on complex carbohydrates with appropriate amounts of foods from meat and dairy products, fruits and vegetables, and with less emphasis on some of the highly processed foods and snack foods that we use in our society.

Increasing access is number two. Do people have access to good foods that they can select from? In many instances they don't. People have to have the finances to purchase good foods, and they have to have availability—access to good produce, meats, and grains.

What are some signs of malnutrition that educators could look for?
If the child seems very, very small for his or her age or appears to have lost significant weight over a short period of time, these signs can be associated with acute malnutrition.

Malnutrition may be associated with increased prevalence of recurrent infection. If a child is out of school continually for documented infections, or has to excuse him or herself repeatedly to go to the bathroom because of diarrhea, that would be a child to consider for a visit to the school nurse. The nurse could check the child's height and weight and inquire a little about eating habits.

Resources

➤ *Recommended Daily Allowances*, 10th edition, *the* source for all those nutrient figures on food labels. $14.95 plus tax. National Research Council, 2101 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055, 800/624-6242.

➤ "Malnutrition, Poverty, and Intellectual Development" by J. Larry Brown and Ernesto Pollitt, *Scientific American*, February 1996.

Letters

PARENTAL WRONGS

I fear for us as educators if the so-called Parental Rights Amendment ever gains ground (Legal, February). If it passes, our ability to educate young people according to any standards—federal, state, or otherwise—will be hampered drastically.

Parents, however well-meaning, will be able to stifle anything and everything we try to do to prepare their children for the unforgiving world they will face beyond high school.

If their child fails to measure up or meet the challenges successfully, we will be blamed—much as we are now—even though they will have been much the cause for the failure—just as they are now.

Unfortunately, a lot of what is wrong with our schools today, especially on the high school level, is lack of parental involvement, lack of parental support for teachers, and an unwillingness on the part of parents to assume responsibility for discipline.

Seth Benson
Millen, Georgia

AGE-OLD DEBATE

The debate on the question "Should age determine grade level?" (February) wasn't satisfactorily answered by either side. Each of the debaters destroys the credibility of his argument by tossing in spurious straw men.

One—a high school teacher—claims that high school would be a drag socially for 14-year-olds. Actually, it's a drag socially for 90 percent of the young people there! The other debater—an elementary educator—calls a grade a "team," when it is, in fact, a grade.

Given the different specialities of the two debaters, it's clear they weren't even addressing the same issue.

As an experienced kindergarten teacher, it's my firm belief that all children should be five years old when they enter kindergarten. At the high school level, a student's chronological age isn't nearly as important as their emotional age.

Both men have a legitimate point. Neither one proved it.

Randall Freeman
Menifee, California

I was intrigued by the question "Should age determine grade level?" But I soon realized that the topic had nothing to do with immigrant children trying to learn English. Here is where we need to do some serious rethinking of our current guidelines.

I never gave this area any serious consideration until one of my students from El Salvador asked me why he was placed in high school even though he could barely speak English. I told him that in this country, if you're 16 you have to go to high school because the Department of Education is interested in grouping people together with like abilities.

Right after I explained the law to this student, I realized what a foolish rule it is. In El Salvador, students can be 35 years old in the first grade if they've never been to school. Making 14- to 17-year-old refugees attend high school is utter folly. When they reach 18, they have to go to adult school.

Wouldn't it make more sense to allow non-native speakers to be placed according to ability rather than age?

Gerald Lunderville
Long Beach, California

DRIVE A MILE

Tami Buzbee's story about a day in the life of a bus driver (SoundOff, February) should be read by every teacher and parent.

I've never driven a school bus, but, as a 35-year teacher, I've always had a deep appreciation for bus drivers. It takes a very special individual to be a school bus driver. Let's show our school bus drivers that we appreciate them!

Mary Johnson
Lynchburg, Virginia

EQUAL TREATMENT

Teachers working for the public schools must realize that their beliefs about what is or is not normal are immaterial (Letters, February).

As long as there are gay children of taxpayers sitting in our classrooms, we must teach them and treat them just as we would teach and treat anyone else.

My impression from reading and thinking about education is that there are always things left incomplete after every class and always more questions than answers. My hope is that public educators will continue to teach students to ask questions and seek answers, not to follow any dogma.

David Barton Johnson
Newport Beach, California

RECRUITING SUCCESS

I was particularly interested in your article on the promotion of paraprofessionals to the teaching ranks (Human Rights, December).

I was an instructional assistant in an elementary school before I received my teacher certification. The Seattle school district and a local university gave me a chance to enter a teacher education program on a scholarship and do my teacher internship on my regular salary. I'm now teaching high school and resuming my graduate work.

Needless to say, I'm one of only two Black male instructors in the entire school, and the only Black in the math department. Were it not for the district's recruitment program, the math students of color at this school might not have a math instructor of color to go to for inspiration and guidance.

And that would be a tragedy, because while effective teaching has no color, the presence of color has an effect. And in a multicolored student population, that effect is positive.

Victor Scott
Seattle, Washington

WHAT ABOUT ART?

In the past, I've applauded the informative, comprehensive articles usually published in your fine magazine. Still, as a visual arts educator for almost 30 years, I've noticed that you give an unusually small amount of space to our area of the curriculum.

Perhaps the Huntington Woods School has a thriving arts program, but you would never know it from your article (Cover story, December). To say that "this school has everything" illustrates a lack of knowledge as to what the arts contribute to a good education.

The problem-solving and higher order thinking skills that students encounter every day in their art rooms would astound anyone who thinks art education is still "turkeys-drawn-around-hands."

Every day, my students have an opportunity to practice their writing and speaking skills and to participate in aesthetic and critical discussions about their own work and that of others. Every day, most students go through the artistic process—they confront a problem, brainstorm, prepare rough drafts, revise, and evaluate their work.

To exclude the visual arts from your description of a "perfect" school does an injustice to an important group of your readers and negates your responsibility to represent and educate members.

Diane Fogler
Newton, New Jersey

GAG ORDER

I am writing in response to February's inflammatory Book Beat heading, "Finally, a book on values that doesn't make you want to gag." Neither William Bennett's *Book of Virtues* nor Green and Kohl's *A Call to Character* causes me to gag. Why are you so uncomfortable with ideas that challenge your narrow way of thinking? Maybe you should have your gag reflex checked.

How did you decide that Bennett's moralistic outlook is backward-looking? The word "moral" refers to being good or right in conduct and character. I like the idea. Call me a Neanderthal!

James Hanson
Pine City, Minnesota

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

While I found "Fear of Fat" very interesting (Health, December), I couldn't help but notice Michael Levine referred to physical education teachers as "gym teachers."

Like many of my colleagues, I find this very offensive. I did not attend school for many years so that I could teach gym or be referred to as a gym teacher.

Physical education has come a long way since we took it. Today, in many schools, physical education serves as a productive medium not only to teach motor skills and coordination, but to enhance interdisciplinary lesson plans as well.

I hope that in the future *NEA Today* will take more care to show respect for all members of the school community.

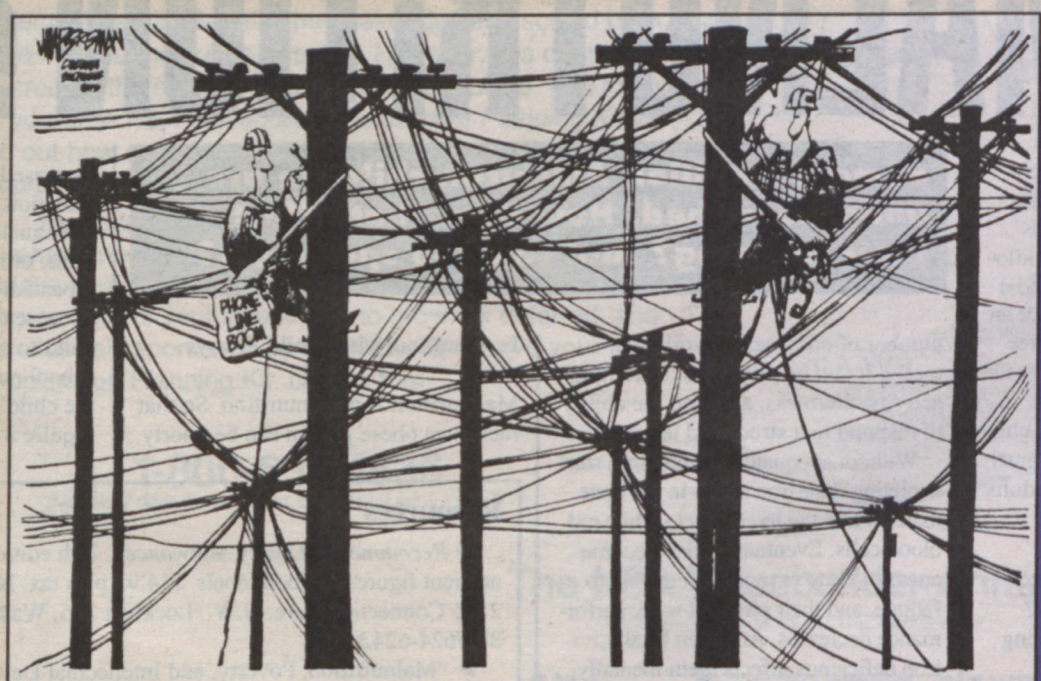
Kimberly Bugash
Columbia, Maryland

ON THE BIAS

I was disturbed after reading "Medicaid Cuts: Who Cares?" (National News, December), in which, once again, the liberal left seeks to pursue its agenda using fear tactics and misinformation.

What "cuts" or "slashes in Medicaid" are going to be made? None! Congress seeks to slow Medicaid spending increases from 12 percent to 7 percent. Please note that the increases in Congress's proposed budget are still double the rate of inflation. This is by no means a cut and is one of the many types of misinformation used in attempts by the media to scare the elderly into rejecting the plan.

By the way, thanks for publishing Congress's phone number. It's



By Jim Borgman, The Cincinnati Enquirer

LETTER FROM: Salem, Oregon

Back in Uniform–And We Like It

By Neal Harris

I first wore a uniform in Cub Scouts in the '50s, in a military school in the early '60s, and then in the Army in the late '60s. For me it seemed rather uncomplicated. I was proud of how I looked, felt like I belonged, and better yet didn't have to worry about what to wear each day.

To be honest, I never gave much thought to uniforms in public schools. With media and local businesses expending so much energy on back-to-school fashions, it would seem almost un-American.

And yet, this year I'm thinking about it. This year, all K-5 students at Lake Labish School in the Salem-Keizer School District are required to wear blue and white uniforms to school.

I must admit I thought Lake Labish a very unlikely place for uniforms. For one, the school is located just outside the city limits of the two communities of Salem and Keizer, on a road that stretches into the farm country and onion fields of the Willamette Valley. For another, it's the smallest and most rural school in the district, with only 85 of the district's 33,000 students. And 75 percent of them are on free or reduced-price lunches.

Students wear uniforms at Lake Labish mostly because parents here wanted them. They're concerned about gangs, about creating a sense of identity, and about having their *own* colors. They feel uniforms will help keep gang clothing out of the school and lessen economic differences among students.

"If you dress like a professional, then you feel like a professional," says Pam Lunsford, one of the parents who serves on the uniform committee. "If students dress smart, maybe they'll feel smart, and they'll want to stay in school." And, she adds, "Everybody will be equal. There won't be anybody standing out."

When the idea of uniforms originally surfaced, the only opposition came from those concerned about costs. But a local company, the Target Corporation, quickly came to the rescue. Target offered to provide the uniforms at a reduced rate and to have them available in their Salem store.

The cost for two white tops, two navy blue bottoms, and one cardigan sweater or sweatshirt is between $45 and $50, depending on size. Students have a choice of various white shirts, as well as navy blue jumpers, shorts, slacks and other clothing. They can't wear jeans. While staff aren't required to wear uniforms, many do tend to wear blue and white much of the time.

So far, all parents have agreed to dress their children in uniforms. Why not? It costs them half of what they would normally spend on back-to-school clothes. Plus those who need financial help can apply to a uniform fund established with donations from Target, service clubs, business partnerships, and private donors.

Savings aside, parents have a variety of reasons for liking uniforms. Many say it saves time and aggravation in the mornings. "It's easier and quicker to get my kids to school on time," says Tom Boulanger. "And students in uniforms can identify with each other better."

Sharlon Bradley says her boys "get a lot of positive comments from the extended family. It's had a good effect on them." Bradley laughs when she says her second grader found uniforms a bit disconcerting at first. "He said he couldn't find his friends on the playground because they all looked alike!"

Alice McCaleb says her fourth grade granddaughter is behaving better this year because she's not feeling the pressure of competing for clothes. Her granddaughter in preschool isn't required to wear a uniform, but because her older sisters do, she insists on wearing one, too.

The emphasis at Lake Labish has been to promote school spirit and increase all students' self-esteem—and it's working. "On field trips," says second and third grade teacher Linda Geissler, "older students remind younger students to tuck in their shirts and to look good."

Judy Gamma, the kitchen manager, says that she no longer hears students making rude comments about other kids' clothing in the lunch line. "This year," she says, "they're acting more like a family." Principal Ruby Price and school office manager Malia West see improved attendance and fewer discipline problems.

As the school year progresses, I find the parents and staff increasingly committed to and supportive of the idea.

In August, Jim Griffin, a fourth and fifth grade teacher and Air Force veteran, says he was concerned about students losing their individual identity. Now a convert, Griffin says students have begun to develop a sense of identity through means other than clothes.

"What's surprised me most," Griffin says, "is that I've yet to hear one student complain. I surveyed my students, and all of them were positive. One wrote, 'Now I have something decent to wear.'"

All the students I've talked to like wearing the uniforms. When I asked Kenny, a third grader, if he liked looking like the other students, he quickly told me that they didn't all look alike. Some were wearing "skirts, some shorts, and some long pants."

Well Kenny, maybe it really is that *simple* once everyone gets used to it. The end of the Oregon Trail may never look the same.

Neal Harris is full-time president of the Salem Education Association. He teaches at Keizer Elementary School in Salem.

important to let our representatives know that real Americans support their efforts to control spending so that our children inherit a government that's not bankrupt and financially irresponsible.

Lori Griffith
Clarksville, Tennessee

FAILING HERO

What powerful message was sent by the Louisiana teachers hailed for protesting the promotion of a student who failed a required language arts course (Heroes & Zeroes, December)?

Retention is the most highly studied area in all of education research, and the results are clear. For most, retention is counterproductive. Students who fail to learn in one way seldom improve by repeating the same course in which the failure occurred.

Of course, simply promoting the student isn't the answer either. Students who aren't achieving success often need intensive and immediate remediation using a new approach.

Nick Dalrymple
St. Joseph, Illinois

ENTER MS. FRIZZLE

I teach a primary grade, and I use my attire as one way to motivate my students. I enjoy wearing things that reflect what we're studying. I have a sea monster jumper for oceans, and transportation, space, and apple dresses. I have pumpkin, turkey, snowman, valentine, and leprechaun shirts.

I encourage my students to dress along with our theme. They really get involved in and excited about what we're studying. But the opportunity will be lost if students and teachers, as Victor Scott suggests (Letters, November), wear uniforms.

I'd like to know if Mr. Scott sits on the floor with his students during reading time, leads exercises every morning, or plays kickball? I'd like to know how many business people clean up after a painting project, plant seedlings in a flower garden, or do messy science experiments? Would they wear their business suits if they did?

I'm a better teacher when I like what I'm wearing and I'm comfortable. When I wear business clothes, I don't want my students to get close to me, I'm less involved with hands-on activities, and I lose valuable teaching opportunities because I'm concerned about getting dirty.

I suggest we forget about uniforms and get back to what's important—teaching and exciting children about learning.

Cathy Harrison
Atlanta, Georgia

HOW MANY?

Your article on class size was excellent (Research Clues, October). It's so obvious that small classes are vital for student success and teacher effectiveness. I note with sad irony that the "regular" classes in the study had only 22 to 25 students. I'm expected to teach 34 kindergartners in my class!

Sarah Hudson
San Francisco, California

PRO STATUS QUO

It concerns me that NEA seems to always be in favor of the status quo even if there are better ways to get the job done. For example, when I was teaching my government class about vouchers, I received some excellent information from NEA—but it was all "con." We need to rethink the big questions. Maybe, for example, abolishing tenure would encourage us to take our jobs more seriously.

I was taught to always look at both sides of an issue and try to decide what's best. Have we lost sight of this in our union?

Jim Hayes
Buena Park, California

NOMINEES, PLEASE

I enjoy reading your "Heroes & Zeroes" column so much I'm moved to nominate two men for "hero" status.

First, John Wooden, retired UCLA basketball coach and teacher. In a recent interview with the Associated Press, Wooden said, "I think the teaching profession contributes more to the future of our society than any other single profession. I'm glad I was a teacher."

Second, Michael Eisner, CEO at the Walt Disney Company. A while back, Eisner told Larry King that the American Teacher Awards were the most important thing Disney did. I couldn't believe my ears.

Wow!—on both counts.

Marilyn Belcher
Lebanon, Oregon

Let's Talk!

Letters are edited for length and clarity. Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

✔ By mail: Write to Letters, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

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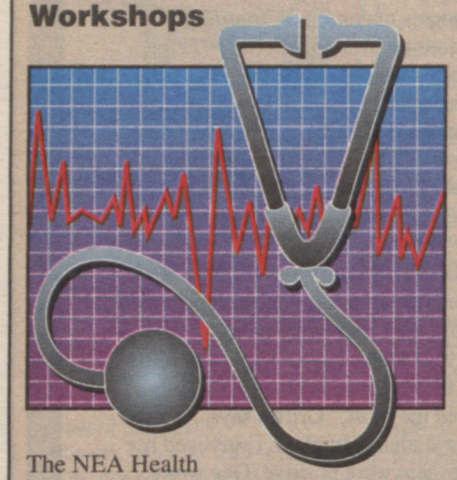
YOUR NEA

Cutting Edge Conference

"Transforming Teaching and Learning," the 1996 NEA National Conference, will be held April 12-14 in Orlando, Florida. It will address the challenges that face American public education in the years ahead, including how to create 21st century learning environments and forge new partnerships for education reform. Panelists will include teachers, policy makers, parents, business leaders, and students. For more information, call the NEA FAX ON DEMAND Service, 800/632-0086.

Health Workshops



The NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN) is looking for members who have had personal experiences with breast or cervical cancer and osteoporosis and are willing to be added to a list of potential workshop panelists.

Those selected will be asked to share their experiences and offer suggestions on how the Association can foster awareness of these health issues.

Interested members should send their names, addresses, phone numbers, and job titles to: Roberta Hantgan, NEA Health Information Network, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Room 521, Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7775. E-Mail: RHantgan @nea.org.

NEA Cosponsors All-USA Team

Once again, NEA is a sponsor of *USA TODAY's* 1996 All-USA Academic Team. An Association representative will help select 20 students based on their academic records. Each student will receive a trophy and a $2,500 cash award.

The winners will be brought to Washington, D.C., where they will meet with CEOs from some of the nation's most powerful corporations.

The 60 students named to the First, Second, and Third Teams will have their achievements reported to the world in a special *USA TODAY* section to be published on May 17.

Get the Proceedings

If you're a life member of NEA and want to know the details about what went on at the 1995 NEA Representative Assembly, sit right down and write.

Clip the label from the front of your copy of *NEA Today* and send it with your request to NEA Membership Records, Attn: Vannette Wiley, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington DC 20036.

Over the Border

The TransBorder Conference, sponsored by the NEA and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), will be held June 7-9 in Ottawa, Canada. The theme: "Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century." The conference is open to all NEA and CTF members. For more information, contact the NEA Office of International Relations, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7488. FAX: 202/822-7974. E-mail: NEAexec14@aol.com.

TV-Free America Says Turn It Off

If you think you and your family watch too much television, turn it off during the second annual TV-Turnoff Week, to be held the last week in April.

TV-Free America asks people to turn off their sets for seven days to promote more family interaction, reading, volunteering, and other activities. For more information, contact TV-Free America, 1322 18th St., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036, 202/887-0436.

New from NFIE

Touching the Future, a new publication from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, relates the experiences of five Christa McAuliffe Educators as they developed projects to improve teaching and learning for culturally diverse students. The report suggests what public school teachers need to know and be able to do to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. It also suggests professional development activities for educators.

Touching the Future costs $5 plus $2.50 s&h (add sales tax in the District of Columbia and California). Mail orders to NFIE Publications, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516 or call 203/934-2669 to order by credit card. Make checks payable to NFIE Publications.

Gardening, Anyone?

The American Horticultural Society will give away free copies of recent back issues of *American Horticulturist* magazine to teachers and school librarians, while supplies last.

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Debate

Should schools bench pregnant cheerleaders?

YES

Jacqueline Brown holds certification in both elementary and secondary education. She currently teaches fifth grade at Jessie D. Clifton Elementary School in Lake Charles, Louisiana and is an activist in her local, the Calcasieu Association of Educators.

Absolutely, emphatically, YES! Pregnant cheerleaders must be benched if public schools are to maintain high standards, provide students with the best possible role models, and teach students the meaning of words like responsibility and leadership.

With public education coming under almost constant attack these days, it's imperative that we do everything possible to assure the American people that their schools still maintain high standards and provide a quality learning environment.

Whether we like it or not, the responsibility for teaching moral values is falling increasingly on us as educators and public school employees. Given the decline in the traditional family structure, it's our job to set the boundaries, to let kids know what's acceptable and what's not.

It's our job to prepare students to become productive, responsible citizens, ready to assume leadership roles in society. To do that job, we must limit the types of behaviors we allow students in leadership positions to model.

Cheerleaders are, by definition, leaders. Being a leader means being a role model, setting an example. Any student holding such an esteemed position should be required to demonstrate leadership qualities—like accountability, honor, and responsibility.

Cheerleaders must realize that they have a responsibility to represent those who elected or appointed them. They are where they are because people trusted them to represent the student body with respect and dignity.

We can't allow those students who haven't accepted the discipline of the position to damage the image of those who have.

If we allow students who become pregnant to serve as leaders, we send a mixed message to our kids.

We tell them that teen pregnancy is wrong—and we're willing to spend millions of dollars to prevent it. So why, then, would we allow pregnant girls to assume leadership roles? Why would we sanction their behavior?

As public school employees, it's our job to teach students that each decision they make has consequences. Those adults who choose to protect students from consequences in school aren't doing a very good job of preparing them for the realities of life.

As harsh as it may sound, except in cases of rape, becoming pregnant is avoidable. It's not a situation over which one has no control. Rather it's the result of a decision—a decision with consequences that teenagers must accept. If becoming pregnant means losing the status and glory that goes with the position of cheerleader, then so be it.

There are some who will argue that this is 1996, not 1956, that things have changed. But some things must never change. We must never lower our standards to meet the needs of an undisciplined society..

Whether we like it or not, it's our job as educators to raise standards and provide students with the guidance they need to meet those standards.

In many districts, school athletes are required to meet a standard: If they don't make a certain grade point average, they don't make the team. That means no college scholarships, and no opportunity to advance and improve their lives.

It's their choice. If they choose not to study or seek the help they need, they pay the price.

There's no difference between this and benching pregnant cheerleaders. It's a matter of maintaining standards.

Being a cheerleader means more than simply learning and performing routines, stunts, and cheers with precision. It means that, as a leader, one must follow certain academic and moral codes. It means living with the consequences of a decision made.

NO

Sandy Kowal is a certified school nurse and health educator at Cherry Hill High School West in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. She has an extensive background in pediatric nursing and has also served as director of a center for chemically dependent teens.

Our country has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy among developed nations. Each year, some 10 percent of our teenagers become pregnant, many of them high school students who no doubt participate in athletic activities, including cheerleading.

Pregnant teens, like all teens, need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. Because the school setting plays such a large role in their socialization process, pregnant teens can easily become isolated and stigmatized.

We must do all we can to help them want to remain in school, be successful, and be safe. We certainly don't want to knowingly place them in a situation of psychological or social disruption.

Any adolescent today is subject to anxiety and episodes of depression. One effective way of dealing with stress and avoiding too much self-preoccupation is participation in goal-oriented athletic activities.

Cheerleading—leading a group in a positive way—can give a teenager who excels and feels comfortable with athletics a sense of empowerment. It's a chance for that kid to stand before peers and represent that which is so important to her. To take this opportunity away could threaten her very identity.

It would certainly be discriminatory to bench a cheerleader solely on the misconception that pregnancy is a disability rather than a normal life process.

Physiologically speaking, as long as her physician finds no problem, there's no reason why a pregnant cheerleader can't participate, remain healthy, and have a healthy baby. The school nurse can work together with the coach and the teen's doctor to ensure that cheerleading poses no physical danger to the teen or to her unborn child.

Usually, the physician will assess the student's pre-pregnancy fitness levels and determine the types of routines that are appropriate. Using these guidelines and directives, the school nurse can work together with the doctor and the coach to develop routines that pose no undue risk.

Safety is the key word. But safety is a concern for the non-pregnant cheerleader as well as the pregnant one. Unsafe practice is unsafe practice whether a student is pregnant or not. Safety rules should be enforced for ALL participating students, not a select few.

Flexibility and modification should be available to all cheerleaders. We make allowances for student athletes suffering minor injuries. Why not do the same for a pregnant cheerleader who chooses, with her physician's approval, to continue to participate?

It's important that the school nurse be an advocate for the pregnant student and that she educate the student's teammates and coach about how pregnancy affects the body. With that information, the coach can modify the pregnant girl's cheering routines.

There are, of course, many physical changes that take place during pregnancy. Pregnant cheerleaders and their coaches should remember that:

- Physically, a woman may handle stress differently when she's pregnant.
- Hormonal changes that occur during the pregnancy will make ankles, knees, and other joints more lax—and more susceptible to injury.
- A pregnant woman's heart rate and body temperature will rise more rapidly than before.

It's vital that the school nurse reinforce these facts with the pregnant teen. In addition, the nurse must encourage the pregnant student to get appropriate rest, watch her diet, monitor fluid intake, and limit the duration of activity.

The pregnant teen should have the same opportunity to succeed as everyone else. And, with the teen's doctor, the school nurse, and the cheerleading coach working together as a team to ensure safety, she can have that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The Case in Texas

A little background on this issue: About three years ago, members of the Hempstead, Texas school board passed a measure to bench pregnant cheerleaders. But it never took effect. The board rescinded the measure at its next meeting because of pressure from the news media and civil liberties organizations. The National Organization for Women even threatened to sue, says Pat Chernosky, editor of *Hotline Press* in Hempstead.

But by then, the issue was moot. Parents of the cheerleaders who were pregnant had already removed them from the squad.

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